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The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

THE SIKHS' VENGEANCE

Indira Gandhi, a commanding figure on the international stage for more than two decades, was an authentic leader of the Third World movement for political self-determination and economic development. She came to dominate Indian life at a time of excruciating transition and turmoil. The optimism of a victorious independence struggle had given way to the difficulties of building an integrated, democratic and just society. Despite serious mistakes and authoritarian lapses, she kept the country on the parliamentary path laid out by her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, and she maintained the commitment of her party, the Indian National Congress, to a progressive and equitable order.

But she was also stubborn, imperious and insensitive, and no policy in her long administration was as misguided as the one that sought to suppress, sometimes by force, the deeply felt demands of the Sikhs for autonomy in Punjab. She may have been right in projecting the goal of an integrated India, where the hundreds of religious, linguistic, racial and ethnic communities could live in harmony. But she was wrong to insist that the disparate elements of the subcontinent be brought under federal control. The bad policy grew out of bad history: those who have disappointed the people's hopes for autonomy in the region have always come to grief. Gen. Reginald Dyer was censured by a British government acting under intense popular pressure after the 1919 Amritsar massacre in Punjab. Pakistan's President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was executed after he fought to prevent the Bengalis of East Pakistan from seceding.

There is no visible successor who approaches Gandhi's ability to hold democratic India together. Another hard transition, and worse turmoil, is surely upon the country, and real dangers for world peace may be in the making.

HISS CASE: FORGERY BY TYPEWRITER
Gil Green
William A. Reuben

STRIKE DIARY
Eric Mann

ARAFAT'S LAST BATTLE?
Jim Rupert

BOLIVIA'S MORATORIUM
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DOS PASSOS
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CINEMATIC ANDROGYNY
Andrew Kopkind

'YELLOW RAIN'

THE CASE IS NOT PROVED

ERIK GUYOT

In September 1981, Secretary of State Alexander Haig accused "the Soviet Union and its allies in Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea and Afghanistan" of employing a new breed of chemical warfare agent—mycotoxins, or "yellow rain." The charge was a serious one: the violation of two major treaties banning such warfare. Yet the evidence Haig and his successor, George Shultz, have offered to substantiate it does not stand up to close scrutiny. Not only is the evidence flawed and inconclusive; it also belies scientific fact, as well as military and political reality in Southeast Asia.

Reports of yellow-rain attacks first surfaced in 1977 after Hmong hill people who had fled from Laos into Thailand, some of whom were carrying on guerrilla actions, told journalists that Laotian Communists, the Pathet Lao, were using a toxic gas against them. The methods of delivery were variously characterized as rockets, aerial spray or bombs. The refugees said the substance emitted produced eye irritation, dizziness, bloody coughing, vomiting and diarrhea. Many deaths were reported. Descriptions of the substance differed. It was generally described as yellow, though some witnesses said it was red, blue, green or white. Some refugees recalled seeing a fine mist, others spoke of yellow raindrops, and still others said it took the form of particles about the size of a grain of rice and sounded like rain when it fell on their roofs.

The wide range of reported agents and symptoms baffled chemical warfare experts, since they did not correspond to any known chemical. The State Department, however, was not deterred by the inconclusiveness of the evidence.

(*Continued on Page 478*)

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LETTERS.

NEOLIBERALS AND 'PALEOTHINKERS'

Hoboken, N.J.

With all the calumny Alan Wolfe hurled at my book, *The Neo-Liberals*, and its namesakes ["Born Yesterday," June 30], he failed to credit the one service I undoubtedly rendered members of the movement: I have finally provided a straw man to replace the one that left-leaning academics like Wolfe have used to attack the neolibs since they first presented themselves to the public four years ago.

That the book has stylistic deficiencies I cannot argue. (Perhaps the editor of this journal, the first person to encourage me to enter the writing racket and to publish my work, would care to comment?) But Wolfe's review is so riddled with errors and fictions that many of his criticisms—which in calmer hands might be worthy—are invalidated. For instance, he faults me for citing Elliot Richardson, "the Republican senior Senator from Rhode Island." Claiborne Pell, whom I quote, was and is the Democratic senior Senator from Rhode Island. Elliot Richardson is indeed a Republican, but has never been a senator and is not from Rhode Island. (Too easy—maybe Wolfe threw that in because beneath the gruff exterior he's really got a soft heart.)

Worse, like many paleothinkers, Wolfe continues to equate environmentalism with no-growth economics. "'Bleeding heart' types might raise environmental concerns but not neoliberals," he writes with wry contempt. I would suggest Wolfe peek at my chapter "Growth in an Era of Limits," the very theme of which is that in the neoliberal mind a concern for the environment specifically does not preclude a concern for economic growth. It goes on to show that acceptance of resource limitations and environmental constraints is a key tenet of the new liberalism. (By the way, Alan, that's how Amory Lovins, who has also gone out of his way in recent years to denounce zero-state economics, can be classified as a neoliberal thinker, much to your dismay.) One can certainly argue whether mainstream liberalism was or was not captured by no-growth thinking; it is an important historical debate. By categorically asserting that it was not, Wolfe's history is trammeled by his ideology.

Wolfe accuses me of not recognizing that such Great Society innovations as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency came about during the Nixon/Ford era, and implies that they hindered economic development. An interesting charge (and one that would do the Reaganites proud), but it has no relationship to *The Neo-Liberals*, for neither agency is mentioned in my book, except for a brief note on the invidious cooperation between the Watt-Burford E.P.A. and industrial polluters. When Wolfe accuses me of not understanding recent history—"the Great Society did, in fact, work surprisingly well," he thumps triumphantly—it's clear he missed the portion of my book in which I noted, "The Great Society's signal accomplishments . . . were clearly successful in extending the right of participation in U.S. society to minorities who had been unjustly and illegally kept from sharing in the American dream." And to disprove my contention that "by the 1970s, growth had all but vanished from the liberal agenda," Wolfe dredges out John Kennedy's 1962 investment tax credits. Forget Reagan—with friends like Alan Wolfe, liberals need no enemies.

Finally, Wolfe's greatest error is to assume that my book is "running for . . . the best-seller list." Would that it were so! But that is wishful thinking which even I would not engage. Then again, if *The Neo-Liberals* can raise such venom as to blind your reviewer, maybe I've got some hope.

Randall Rothenberg

WOLFE REPLIES

Copenhagen

Rothenberg and I agree that his book will not make the best-seller list. Not even a negative review in *The Nation* can help him there.

I really can't blame Rothenberg for pouncing on the one factual error in my review. Due to an editorial mistake at *The Nation*, Elliot Richardson was misidentified as a Republican Senator from Rhode Island. My manuscript did no such thing, thereby making such a faux pas thin material to hang a reply upon.

"Paleothinkers"—that I have never been called before—simply can't work up the enthusiasm that trendy journalists can for the latest in political wisdom. I am, as readers of this magazine know, increasingly unhappy with the refusal of the traditional left to examine its own assumptions. But no matter how critical I become, I can't find a way to jump on the bandwagon of a group of thinkers so transparent in their ambition and so ahistorical in their analysis that they can believe that in this society, with these kinds of capitalists, we can have economic growth and social justice as well.

Otherwise, I cannot work up much indignation against Rothenberg. He wrote a bad book, and I chose to say so. Even someone with a soft heart can do that. *Alan Wolfe*

The editors regret the error.

MONDALE & MOTHERHOOD

New York City

Nancy Folbre's article on the silent erosion of programs for mothers and children provides a good summary of the inexcusable way in which representatives of both the Democratic and Republican Parties have hurt vulnerable citizens ["Motherhood—The Forgotten Issue," Oct. 20]. However, Folbre's conclusion that Walter Mondale doesn't "take these problems to heart" is inaccurate and demonstrates a lack of familiarity with his record.

Mondale's positions on child care, child-support enforcement, family policy and family impact studies of major Federal legislation have been among the most progressive of all elected officials on the Federal scene.

One can certainly question whether the Democratic Presidential campaign's talk of family values is merely a tactical move or an indication of a shift in the candidate's position. As *The Nation*'s editorial ["Subject to Debate"] in the same issue implies, one must separate image from substance during this campaign. On the issues of motherhood and child welfare, Mondale's actions speak louder than Folbre's words. *Alan J. Levy*

FOLBRE REPLIES

New York City

If past actions did indeed speak louder than words, I would have considerably more enthusiasm for candidate Mondale. However, Mondale's current preoccupation with increasing the military budget and reducing the deficit bears little relationship to his past record on those issues. His lack of explicit support for progressive family policies today is less disturbing than his overall program, which has helped remove social welfare from the national political agenda.

In a recent demonstration I carried a sign that read, "If Reagan could get pregnant, he would vote for Mondale/Ferraro." Mondale is certainly more likely than President Reagan to support existing public programs for parents. Unlike President Reagan, he defends mothers' legal rights to abortion. I think *The Nation*'s readership is well aware of these important distinctions. In my article I sought to make a different point: substantive proposals for public support for parents would help, rather than hinder, the Democratic Party's efforts at the polls. *Nancy Folbre*

K.A.L. 007 FOLLOW-UP

On October 25, *The Nation* ran a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*, alerting the press and public to the importance of seeking answers to the questions raised in David Pearson's "K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It." We appreciate all of the 3,016 responses we had received as of November 1.

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EDITORIALS.

Shultz's Soliloquy

Alas, poor Hamlet! Dead these umpteen years in a dank Danish grave and still his name is taken in vain as curse and caution. The Freudians were bad enough, misdiagnosing his perfectly healthy filial relationships as Oedipal *meshugas*. But now we have George Shultz robbing the royal remains long after the funeral meats have cooled. "We cannot allow" the United States, he said, "to become the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond" to terrorism. "Fighting terrorism," he added, "will not be a clean or pleasant contest, but we have no choice but to play it."

Tho' this be madness, yet there is method in it. Shultz is already on record with his definition of terrorism, which includes almost everything foreign adversaries or domestic critics might say or do about his policies. The Administration is pushing legislation that would criminalize the act of giving aid or comfort to any group or government designated as "terrorist" by the Secretary of State, without benefit of judicial review. The bill got lost in last year's Congressional shuffle, but it will be up again in the ninety-ninth. Under its provisions, the Justice Department could decide to prosecute Ed Asner for supporting Medical Aid for (insurgent) El Salvador; or Jesse Jackson for embracing Yasir Arafat and consulting with Fidel Castro; or American *brigadistas* for helping with the Nicaraguan coffee harvest; or college students for joining African National Congress boycotts of apartheid institutions and businesses. Shultz's solil-

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oquy (at New York City's Park Avenue Synagogue) on October 25 presented the political complement to that legislative and judicial campaign. It will surely provide a rationalization for the Administration's expected moves in the Middle East and Central America, as well as its assaults on dissidence at home.

This bodes some strange eruption to our state. Shultz warned that "innocent lives" may be lost in the struggle against terrorism and that American troops may have to be committed to the fray. The charade of covert war is hardly necessary anymore. President Reagan has removed much of the moral stigma previously attached to such murderous operations, and last month he encouraged the recruitment of American mercenaries to fight for the right in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Reagan appealed to the sense of romantic rebellion that has led Americans to volunteer in foreign revolutions throughout history, but state-sponsored voluntarism is government intervention by other means: it removes both the politicians who promote it and the soldiers who carry it out from public control.

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. Contingency plans for the bombing of Nicaragua and the termination, with extreme prejudice, of the Sandinista leadership are waiting for a Presidential O.K. According to the Shultz doctrine, any act of terrorism would do. And according to the helpful suggestions in the C.I.A.'s operations manual distributed to America's *contras*, we need not wait for our enemies to move. Reagan's rebels are advised to assassinate one of their own to create a martyr. Perhaps an American ambassador, or at least a consul or businessman could be chosen instead. It is, after all, "not a clean or pleasant contest." Shultz calls it necessary; it sounds like murder most foul.

Forgery by Typewriter

In papers he received as the result of a Freedom of Information Act request, Gil Green, an official of the Communist Party, recently found documentation that the Federal Bureau of Investigation was in the business of forgery by typewriter. Below, Green sets forth his discovery and tells how he came upon it. Because typewriter evidence was at the heart of the Alger Hiss case, we asked William A. Reuben, author of Footnote on an Historic Case: In re Alger Hiss, *to explain how this startling development relates to the critical cold war case.* —*The Editors*

Evidence in recently released F.B.I. files shows that the Bureau has for many years had the ability to commit forgery by typewriter.

In 1978, when I began writing an autobiographical account of the McCarthy years, I applied under the Freedom of Information Act for all F.B.I. files relating to me. I had been convicted in 1949 along with ten other top Communist leaders in the first of the fourteen Smith Act trials. When the Supreme Court upheld our convictions, in June 1951, I went "underground." Five years later, I surrendered and served five and a half years of an eight-year sentence in Leavenworth penitentiary.

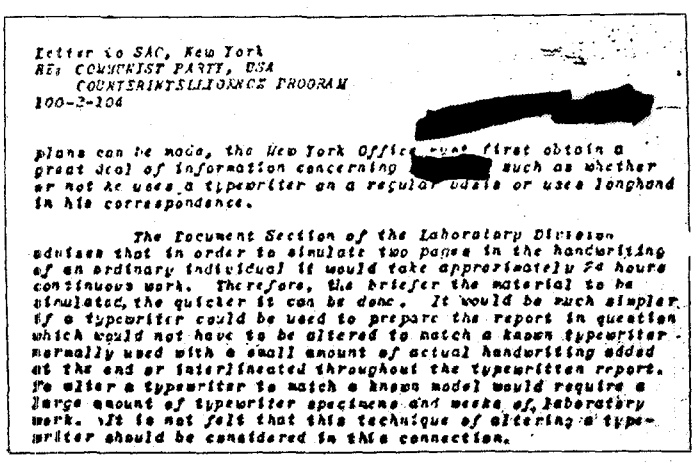
Eventually, with the help of Prof. Edward Greer of Northeastern University, I obtained some 20,000 pages from the F.B.I., a tiny fraction of the files indexed in my name. Sanitized though they were, they disclosed many of the Bureau's cruel and unlawful activities. One particularly sordid example stands out: a high-priority plot to frame a Communist leader by accusing him of being an F.B.I. informer.

In late 1959, F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover and the New York Special Agent in Charge (S.A.C.) corresponded about which Communist Party leaders would be most vulnerable to a frame-up. Hoover urged caution "so as it insures success and avoids embarrassment to the Bureau." On February 15, 1960, the New York S.A.C. asked Hoover for advice "as to the capabilities of the [F.B.I.] Laboratory in this matter." Four days later Hoover replied that Washington would first need "adequate handwriting specimens . . . [and] a great deal of information concerning [name deleted], such as whether or not he uses a typewriter on a regular basis or uses longhand in his correspondence." The Bureau chief explained that

> in order to simulate two pages in the handwriting of an ordinary individual it would take approximately 24 hours continuous work. Therefore, the briefer the material to be simulated, the quicker it can be done. . . . To alter a typewriter to match a known model would require a large amount of typewriter specimens and weeks of laboratory work. It is not felt that this technique of altering a typewriter should be considered in this connection.

When I read this letter, I remembered that in 1964, William Albertson, a New York State C.P. leader, had been expelled from the party as an F.B.I. informer on the basis of a two-page letter that reported to the F.B.I. on a recent meeting and appeared to be in his handwriting. The party's secretariat, which had obtained the letter under unusual circumstances, had it examined by experts, who said the handwriting was Albertson's. I wondered if Albertson had been the victim of an F.B.I. forgery.

Rereading Hoover's letter, I also recalled that Alger Hiss had been unable to substantiate his charge that he had been



Letter to SAC, New York
RE: COMMUNIST PARTY, USA
COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
100-3-104

[redacted]

plans can be made, the New York Office must first obtain a great deal of information concerning [redacted] such as whether or not he uses a typewriter on a regular basis or uses longhand in his correspondence.

The Document Section of the Laboratory Division advises that in order to simulate two pages in the handwriting of an ordinary individual it would take approximately 24 hours continuous work. Therefore, the briefer the material to be simulated, the quicker it can be done. It would be much simpler if a typewriter could be used to prepare the report in question which would not have to be altered to match a known typewriter normally used with a small amount of actual handwriting added at the end or interlineated throughout the typewritten report. To alter a typewriter to match a known model would require a large amount of typewriter specimens and weeks of laboratory work. It is not felt that this technique of altering a typewriter should be considered in this connection.

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a victim of forgery by typewriter. Here, from J. Edgar Hoover himself, was confirmation that as far back as 1959 the F.B.I. had a technique for producing such a forgery. Hoover's matter-of-fact discussion suggests that forgery by typewriter was by then an established procedure. Was it available at the time of Hiss's perjury trial in 1950?

What seemed incredible to many when Hiss first made his charge must now be given credence. GIL GREEN

Gil Green's book Cold War Fugitive *will be released by International Publishers next January.*

New Development

When the Supreme Court refused, in October 1983, to review Alger Hiss's petition for a writ of error *coram nobis* of his 1950 conviction on perjury charges, one of the most significant political trials in American history had finally come to an end. But the documents released to Gil Green—showing that under J. Edgar Hoover the Federal Bureau of Investigation had the ability and the willingness to commit forgery by typewriter—raise disturbing questions.

The key evidence against Hiss, everyone familiar with the case agrees, was sixty-five pages of typewritten copies of State Department documents and cables dated in the first four months of 1938. Those copies were said to have been typed on a Woodstock typewriter that Hiss and his wife, Priscilla, had owned in the 1930s. The typing was supposedly done in Hiss's home in Washington by Priscilla Hiss, and the copies turned over to Whittaker Chambers for delivery to Soviet agents.

The sixty-five pages—which surfaced in 1948, more than ten years after the alleged espionage had ceased—were the only corroboratory evidence ever produced for Chambers's story that he and Hiss had spied together for the Soviet Union during the 1930s.* And Chambers was the government's only witness against Hiss in his trial for perjury. Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Murphy spelled out their importance to the government's case in his summation:

> I told you in the beginning that the facts would be proved by the immutable documents, and there, ladies and gentlemen, are the documents. They do not change. They are there and have been there for 11 or 12 years. . . . They cannot be altered. They are immutable. . . . Take them with you to the jury room. . . . What do they prove? Ladies and gentlemen, it proves treason, and that is the traitor.

Only Ramos C. Feehan, an F.B.I. document examiner, corroborated Chambers's claim that the copies were genuine. Feehan said that after comparing Chambers's papers, referred to as the Baltimore exhibits, with "standards" conceded to have been typed on the Woodstock when it was in the Hisses' possession, he had concluded that "the same machine was used to type [the] Baltimore Exhibits . . . that was used to type the standards." Although Feehan had based his opinion on a comparison of only ten characters and did not identify Priscilla Hiss as the typist, he was not cross-examined by the defense. (The defense offered evidence that the Hisses had given away the Woodstock prior to the dates on Chambers's papers.)

Just before he was sentenced, Alger Hiss briefly reasserted his innocence and added, "I am confident that in the future the full facts of how Whittaker Chambers was able to carry out forgery by typewriter will be disclosed."

Two and a half years later, after Hiss had begun serving his five-year prison sentence, his new counsel, the late Chester T. Lane, moved for a retrial. Lane said he had new evidence proving "a technique of forgery by typewriter exists which was not known about at the time of the trial," that the Baltimore exhibits "are an ingenious set of forgeries" and that "the typewriter in evidence at the trials is a fake machine. . . . it can only have been planted on the defense by or on behalf of Whittaker Chambers as part of his plot for the false incrimination of Alger Hiss."

The government ridiculed Lane's motion as "frivolous" and "absurd." In 1978, when Hiss filed the *coram nobis* petition, it took the same position. Hiss's petition was in large measure based on the claim that the typewriter could not possibly have been the original Hiss machine and that this had been established by the F.B.I.'s own investigation. According to the government's argument, set forth by U.S. Attorney Robert B. Fiske Jr., that contention was "Hiss' fanciful theory." Fiske asked, "If Exhibit UUU was fabricated for the purposes of the libel action or the criminal prosecution, who built it and why?"

The courts have consistently accepted the government's argument that forgery by typewriter is a fantasy, and Hiss—rebuffed eight times by the higher courts in his thirty-five-year attempt to establish his innocence—has never been able to get a hearing on this issue.

Many scholars have also dismissed the forgery-by-typewriter argument. Allen Weinstein, author of *Perjury*, accepted in many quarters as the definitive work establishing Hiss's guilt, approvingly quotes Feehan's recent statement that "forgery by typewriter is impossible" and that the typewriter in the case "not only could not have been forged, but was not as far as I know."

Hoover's 1960 memorandum casts considerable doubt on that assertion, however. The case of Alger Hiss may legally be closed, but the F.B.I. director's admission that the Bureau had the capacity to commit such a forgery and the implication that it had in the past utilized the technique suggest that the prediction Hiss made on his sentencing day may yet come true. WILLIAM A. REUBEN

William A. Reuben, the author of The Atom Spy Hoax *and* The Honorable Mr. Nixon *(both by Action Press), has been in court since 1967 attempting to get documents from the F.B.I. on the Hiss case and Whittaker Chambers.*

* Chambers also produced four small notes in Hiss's handwriting on scratch-pad paper and two strips of microfilm of original State Department documents. Although the handwritten notes and the microfilm were melodramatic, they were legally insignificant. The notes could have been easily stolen out of someone's wastebasket, and the microfilms were of documents that had been distributed to some 150 people in the State Department, leaving only Chambers's word to prove that he had obtained them from Hiss.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Capsule Assignment

Several days ago I was given an assignment to write this column. It is to go into a time capsule and will be read in one week, when the time capsule is opened. I remember riding downtown on the IRT yesterday. My mind was full of what I was going to put in the column. And then I realized what a job I had. I was writing for people who would know everything about us. What they would think about us a week from now depended on how we kept our rendezvous with destiny.

So I took a look to see what other people were putting in the time capsule. I looked in the *New York Times* Week in Review section, and I found the wisdom of Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, who said that in the face of the Soviet threat President Reagan had turned out to be a paper tiger: big words but no big stick. Worse still, Reagan was destroying the public consensus for increased defense spending.

There was, wrote Shanker, an alternative to the great appeaser: Walter Mondale. Shanker turned to an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* two days after the last debate:

> Mondale denounced Cuba as a police state, condemned Che Guevara, said Lebanon's terrorists had called Mr. Reagan's retaliatory bluff, refused to accept Soviet control of Eastern Europe, called for extending credits to the Soviets only at market rates, demanded that Nicaragua confine its activities within its borders, refused to exchange strategic information with the Soviets to get an arms agreement, supported cruise missiles and repudiated an unverifiable nuclear freeze.

"What you see is what you get," Mondale likes to say about himself, and Al Shanker, nobody's fool, thought he'd seen and hoped he'd get the Mondale of the *Journal* quote. Then I turned a few pages in the same issue of the Week in Review and found Eugene Rostow, professed Democrat and arms negotiator for Reagan, worrying that the Mondale of Campaign '84 was soft on Communism.

Cold war liberals are never satisfied, which is why we were given the crowning ghastly absurdity of the entire political year: the spectacle of Mondale denouncing Reagan for his proposal to share Star Wars technology with the Russians. It was at this moment that a significant portion of the national audience, trying to figure out which of the two men would be less likely to blow up the planet, decided that Reagan is more a man of peace than Mondale is. Next time you hear cold war liberals like Ben Wattenberg urging the Democratic Party to return to the "mainstream," remind them that this Democratic strategy was their answer to McGovern in 1972.

As I rode along in the subway thinking what to put in the time capsule I thought of all the chances Mondale had missed and all the stupid things he had said about the deficit, Star Wars and Che Guevara; how he had repudiated Yalta, endorsed a quarantine of Nicaragua and promised higher taxes and a drug czar, and I thought maybe those tough-minded pragmatists who say "Hold your nose and vote for Gus Hall" have a point. The pragmatists argue that since the recession is already upon us, why have Mondale supervise four years of misery and usher in a Republican landslide in 1988, instead of four years of drift amid the noise of lame ducks quacking in the Rose Garden, during which progressive forces could get their act together.

But no. There are many very horrible things Reagan can do in four years. Lesser in so many ways, Mondale would be the lesser of two evils too, just as a Democratic-controlled Congress would be a lesser evil than a Republican one.

Super-Ron

Of the network commentators giving instant analysis after the debate only Roger Mudd and John Chancellor (both from the Communist-sponsored *NBC Nightly News*) were seriously critical of Reagan. David Brinkley confided to George Will that he had not caught any serious factual mistakes in the preceding hour and a half. The next day, normally rational observers persisted in such raptures. Beneath the headline "A forceful Reagan regains his image," Lars-Erik Nelson, Washington bureau chief of the New York *Daily News*, wrote, "President Reagan bounced back last night from an image of near-senility with a forceful, coherent defense of his military and foreign policies."

The intensity of such demented claims, endlessly reiterated, serve to underline the essential point: the press understood well that it would be disturbing to civil order and domestic tranquillity to labor the point that the man on whom a majority of American voters were likely to set their hearts for four more years has only a tenuous relationship to truth or the realities of the modern world.

Amid the innumerable spasms of ignorance and outright deception, here's one that has not been refuted. The President claimed, "No, I never defended Somoza." Yes, he did. On January 2, 1978, in a broadcast on station KGO, California, Reagan lashed out at leftist critics of Nicaragua such as NACLA, Jack Anderson and Representative Edward Koch. Conceding that Nicaragua had been ruled by military men for four decades, Reagan insisted, "It has never been known as a major violator of human rights. Keep that in mind, for in recent months it has been getting a bad press." (Understandably, since Somoza's savage bombings and ground assaults in Zelaya and Matagalpa had left 3,000 dead.) Reagan added that Somoza had made progress against illiteracy and that Nicaragua had been a "staunch supporter of the United States in world forums, and is strongly anticommunist."

The press wouldn't want to expose Reagan's Somoza lie because the way things are going, it rather agrees with him about the retrospective virtues of Somoza and his anticommunism. U.S. press coverage of Nicaragua now echoes the views of the U.S. Embassy in Managua at almost all times. Consider the case of Virgilio Godoy, Independent Liberal candidate in the Nicaraguan elections. For months he stumped the country, harshly and publicly criticizing the Sandinistas. For months Stephen Kinzer of *The New York Times* ignored his existence. Kinzer found his time more constructively occupied in writing about the noncandidacy of Arturo

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Cruz. Only at the moment Godoy withdrew from the election did Kinzer recognize, in retrospect, Godoy's campaigning; his withdrawal could be cited to buttress a U.S. aim in Central America: discrediting the Nicaraguan elections.

The Gelb Affair

The Times is becoming so freighted with conflicts of interest, actual or potential, that I'm surprised it doesn't just run a disclaimer notice in place of the editorials. The most obvious example in recent days has been the paper's continued use of Claire Sterling as a reporter of the circumstances surrounding the attempt on the Pope's life.

As disturbing as the use of Sterling is the case of Leslie Gelb, national security correspondent for *The Times*. Gelb worked in the Pentagon (where he supervised the compiling of the Pentagon papers) before removing to the Brookings Institution and thence to *The Times*, where he served as national security correspondent before joining Cyrus Vance's State Department as director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. His place at the newspaper was taken by Richard Burt, who later, with Reagan, assumed Gelb's old position at the State Department. Gelb returned to his job at *The Times* after a stint at the Carnegie Endowment.

On October 23, Walter Pincus, who covers the national security beat for *The Washington Post*, disclosed a recent study undertaken by the Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School, which revealed that in 1978 Gelb helped set up a covert C.I.A. program to influence the European press to write approvingly about the neutron bomb. The program was designed to cause "U.S. sympathizers and agents in the European press to give more favorable press coverage to the bomb, either for money or for free." The Harvard study said that the program had been suggested in two State Department memorandums written in January 1978. One, by Gelb, was titled "Proposal for Action in Response to Soviet Anti-Neutron Bomb Campaign," and the other, by Gelb and George Vest (then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, the post now occupied by Richard Burt), was called "Covert Action to Counter International Anti-Neutron Bomb Forum."

The study concludes that the covert program was undertaken and that it met with some success. European coverage of the neutron bomb changed markedly in the spring of 1978. Pincus's story quoted "one official" involved in the program as saying Gelb was "the only one who questioned" the use of covert tactics. Pincus reported that Gelb "would not comment on his role in the operation or how it turned out." Two days later *The New York Times* ran a story by Philip Taubman which was shorter than Pincus's but slightly less agreeable to Gelb. Taubman quoted the study as saying Gelb "was a leading advocate of the covert program." He cited no official to claim a more beneficent role for him. Gelb said he could not recall details of the proposals but insisted that they were intended to supplant more ambitious plans.

None of this was illegal. C.I.A. guidelines bar the agency's use of U.S. journalists; foreign hacks are considered fair game. In 1977 *The Times* ran a long series by John Crewdson critical of ties between journalists and secret government operations. *The Times* presumably believes in an independent press in Western Europe as well as in the United States. The paper is now in the awkward position of having as one of its most prominent reporters someone who not long ago was advocating covert interference.

There are other serious problems. Gelb, today a journalist, refuses to divulge matters to which he was privy as a government official in 1978. For a servant of government this may be admirable, but what about a servant of the press? It is not as though Gelb were the gardening correspondent. His beat covers the terrain with which he was concerned when he was at the State Department. Much of his journalism since he returned to *The Times* has concerned the missiles and kindred weaponry whose virtues he was seeking to promote in 1978. There is presumably other information acquired when he was in government that he feels duty-bound not to share with his readers. But is this a seemly credential for a national security correspondent?

It depends on how one views Gelb and how realistic one cares to be about the supposedly disinterested objectivity with which a reporter approaches his beat, particularly the national security beat. As such things go, Gelb has, in the present context of *The New York Times* and particularly when measured against the scandalous performance of Richard Burt, been mostly a moderate and well-informed voice in favor of arms control, though of course he accepts the usual premises of the cold war. So a realist could make an assessment of Gelb's overall political trajectory and not grieve excessively about what he did in 1978. Those who would argue that this is shortsighted ex parte relativism should take up my demand that all national security correspondents submit to public confirmation hearings in the Senate.

Et Tu, Tutu

And finally, I would place in the time capsule, in a very thin envelope, the total U.S. press coverage of the vote in the Security Council of the United Nations on October 23 in which fourteen members condemned apartheid and the United States alone abstained. Jeane Kirkpatrick attributed the abstention to "excesses of language" in the resolution. No paper that I read explained what those excesses were. The French ambassador to the United Nations, Luc de la Barre de Nanteuil, had reservations about the description of apartheid as a "crime against humanity" before voting for the resolution. The British ambassador, Sir John Thomson, said of the same phrase that he took it as a term of "abhorrence rather than a technical legal description." He, too, voted for the resolution. Jeane Kirkpatrick must have objected to the description of apartheid as a "crime against humanity," so she abstained. No major U.S. news outlet made anything of this, just as no journalist asked the candidates about southern Africa in the last debate. As the people who open the time capsule will no doubt be aware, there were many things in the dwindling days of October deemed unfit for public discourse.

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ARTICLES.

VIEW FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

The Diary of a U.A.W. Dissident

This year's General Motors contract was nearly voted down by the nation's automobile workers, as David Bensman explained in these pages last week ["The Downside of the G.M. Contract"]. The ratification fight exposed the depth of rank-and-file opposition to the International leadership of the United Automobile Workers.

In September the Van Nuys, California, local was one of thirteen to strike against G.M. while contract talks were under way. The following is a striker's diary, which describes what the contract negotiations looked like from the shop floor. —*The Editors*

ERIC MANN

Tuesday, August 28: As the contract deadline approached, 4,400 of us at the G.M. plant in Van Nuys received a leaflet from our shop committee asking for a strike vote to strengthen the union's hand in negotiations with the company.

Wednesday, August 29: More than 96 percent voted in favor of a walkout. Although U.A.W. president Owen Bieber makes general statements about job security, only a few of the more than one hundred workers I've talked to can name one concrete demand that would make our jobs secure. By keeping the membership in the dark, Bieber has much greater flexibility. It's hard to be accused of selling out if you never explain what you're trying to win.

Friday, September 14: Twenty-two hundred of us work the night shift. If there is no settlement tonight, we walk. Everyone is apprehensive but also a little excited. As the beautiful $14,000 Camaros and Firebirds that we assemble move along the line, the foremen tell us: "You watch, there won't be a strike. They'll work it out at the last minute, so pay attention to your work." At 8:40 our elected union committeeman walks down the line with a big sign: "UAW ON STRIKE FOR JOB SECURITY." A roar goes up from the workers which drowns out the machinery. At 8:59 we walk—past the foremen, past the Camaros with no bumpers and no transmissions.

For a brief moment as we march out of that cavernous factory, the power of the working class becomes clear to me, and it becomes clear why society hides it, especially from the workers themselves. A strike is not always the best tactic, but now G.M.'s profits are astronomical and production can barely keep up with sales. The company needs those cars, and it needs us to produce them.

Eric Mann is coordinator of the Campaign to Keep G.M. Van Nuys Open, U.A.W. Local 645.

As we walk into the glare of television lights on Van Nuys Boulevard, thousands of workers waiting outside scream, cheer, honk the horns of their cars. We all tell the TV reporters the same thing: "G.M. has made plenty of profits. It's time they stopped threatening to lay us off and close our plant; it's time we got a substantial raise and a pledge of job security."

Monday, September 17: The next morning we awoke to find ourselves alone. To our surprise, we heard on TV that we were not part of a national strike for job security but that our local was one of thirteen striking over local demands. Why weren't all the G.M. locals pulled out? The International office explained it didn't want to cripple G.M. Great! G.M. is threatening to eliminate 80,000 jobs permanently, but we don't want to cripple it.

Sunday night, taking the International's story at face value, some of the more conciliatory members of our bargaining committee reached an agreement with the Van Nuys management and declared that the strike was over. Since it was a local strike, why stay out? So while twelve other U.A.W. locals remained on strike, the Van Nuys workers returned to work this morning. "Four hours on strike—we sure forced G.M. to its knees," the more militant workers joked. Some of them did more than joke. At lunchtime hundreds stormed across the street to the union hall, demanding to know why they had been ordered back to work before the local contract was ratified. They were supported by local president Pete Beltran, who pointed out that the U.A.W. constitution gives us the right to stay out until the agreement is signed. Led by Beltran, other officers issued a new strike order, and the workers marched out of the factory again. Those of us on the second shift showed up amid great confusion, and more than 90 percent agreed to continue the strike.

Tuesday, September 18: More than 2,300 angry workers showed up for a ratification meeting. The shop committee's report on the local contract was interrupted by frequent booing. Many people were critical of the pact, but the main thing bothering the members was the lack of democracy. "Here they ask for a strike vote and I can hardly explain what we're striking for," one man said. "And then they send me back to work and I can't explain to my wife what the hell we got. It makes you lose confidence in the leadership."

Beltran tried to focus the members' anger. If we went back to work we would have no leverage with G.M. or the International on issues of job security, he said. Besides, our local is conducting the Campaign to Keep G.M. Van Nuys Open calling for a California boycott of G.M. products if the company ever closes our plant, which it is threatening to do [see Mann, "Workers and Community Take On G.M.," *The Nation*, February 11]. Since a boycott would affect other U.A.W. locals at G.M. plants, we have been asking them to support our campaign as a show of solidarity. If Van Nuys went back to work while twelve other locals were still on strike, our credibility would be lost. Militancy and

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strategy coincided as a better-informed membership voted 1,756 to 565 to stay out.

Wednesday and Thursday, September 19 and 20: What do you do when you're on strike? In too many unions, being on strike simply means pulling picket duty and waiting it out; we attend classes in labor history. Kelley Gemco, the education chair, shows videotapes of the Van Nuys campaign and films like *With Babies and Banners*, depicting the role of women in the historic Flint sit-down strike of 1937, which forced G.M. to recognize the U.A.W. We also have long discussions of the issues in the current negotiations.

Friday and Saturday, September 21 and 22: At midnight on Thursday a TV news bulletin showed G.M.'s top negotiator, Al Warren, gushing about "Owen" and the "statesmanlike attitude of the U.A.W. negotiators."

"As soon as I saw G.M. heaping all that praise on the International, I knew the fix was in," one worker grumbled. Warren said that a tentative settlement had been reached.

While we were planning our response to the settlement, an order came down from the International that we go back to work. If we didn't, we would lose all strike benefits, and our local would be put in trusteeship (by which the local is denied self-governance and all its political and financial affairs are placed in the hands of a "trustee," handpicked by the International). Just a week before, the International told us that it wasn't a national strike and that we had the right to stay out over local issues; now the leaders had to show the company they could enforce discipline. We decided that since all the other locals were going back, we would concentrate on defeating the contract and not risk the loss of our local charter by fighting the International alone.

Monday, September 24: We go back to work, before ratifying our local or national contract. The *Los Angeles Times* gloats, "Rebellious Local Returns to Work, Bows to National Chief's Stern Order." As we return to the line, all the militancy and pride we had felt when we walked out is replaced by dejection and confusion. The foremen rub it in: "So here you are again. Now what the hell did that strike get you, anyway?" That is a question we can't answer. At this moment, the power of the company has never seemed stronger.

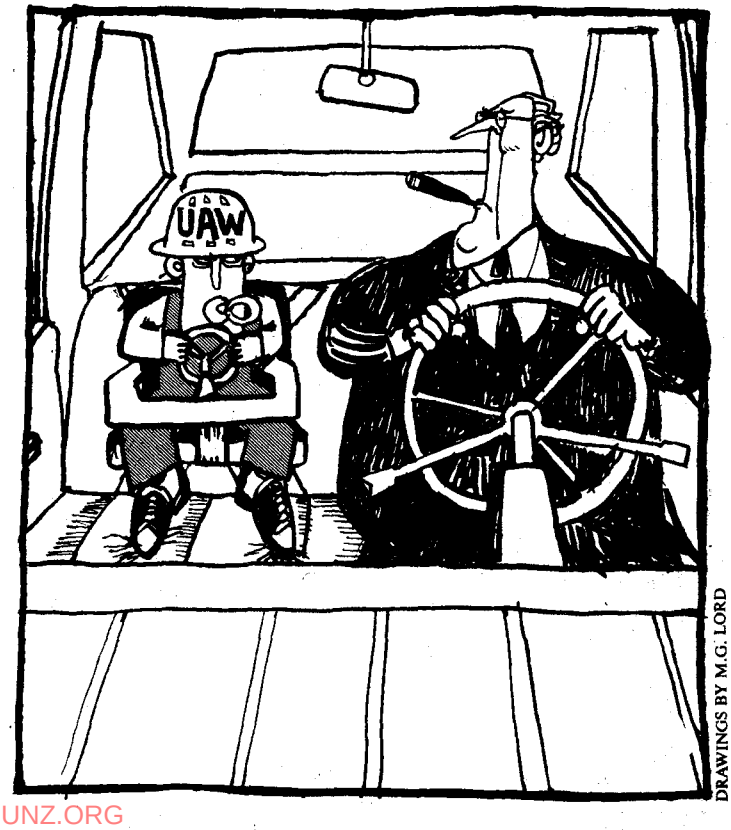
Sunday, September 30: More than 1,200 workers listened to a report on the contract. The representatives of the International gave a long, boring presentation in which they admitted that the "job bank" provision of the contract (which establishes a fund for retraining workers who are laid off because of new technology or subcontracting) would not apply to Van Nuys if G.M. carried out its plans to close the plant.

Beltran presented a minority report, urging us to vote No. More than twenty-five workers got up to denounce the contract and the leadership. Some used such strong language that the International representatives had to remind them that children were present. Then the contract was put to a vote. To the amazement of many, it was ratified by a 2-to-1 margin.

After talking with many workers, I learned why. A lot of the more conservative ones just wanted to sign the contract and go back to work. They feel that they are well paid and that we can't stop G.M. from closing the plant. Their attitude is, Let's just collect our paychecks while we can. The vast majority of workers believe we were sold out, but they didn't want to strike, figuring that even if we forced the union back to the bargaining table, it would just keep us out a few months to break our spirit, then push us back to work with the same package. Ironically, the deep-seated cynicism about the International served the leadership's interests. The Yes vote on the contract was, in effect, a vote of no confidence.

Finally, many workers were misled by media reports that announced the contract had been endorsed almost unanimously by U.A.W. local presidents. We were one of the first locals to vote, and we were shocked to discover later that workers in Lordstown, Ohio, voted it down 3 to 1. Locals at Lakewood (Georgia), Oldsmobile Lansing and Saginaw Steer and Gear (Michigan), Linden (New Jersey) and many other plants rejected the contract. Many workers had felt that isolated resistance was futile in view of the International's threats of trusteeship. Had they known there was strong opposition in the Midwest locals, the vote would have been different.

The G.M. contract was ratified by a 58 percent to 42 percent vote. Its impact—dramatic and permanent job elimination with the International union's complicity—will be felt for years to come. Yet because the International is ideologically and politically tied to the coattails of the Big Three, it sees its role as providing benefits to those eliminated and representing the survivors, rather than challenging the company's prerogatives to invest and disinvest capital and to hire and fire workers.



DRAWINGS BY M.G. LORD

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Apparently, the International is willing to rule rather than govern, overriding the wishes of 40 percent of the membership who voted No on the contract. But the opposition needs to solve certain political problems before it can become more effective. Many black workers feel that their legitimate grievances about discrimination, on the shop floor and within the U.A.W. itself, have been dismissed by the white reform leadership. Several of the most militant local presidents reject the idea of a national opposition caucus or network because they fear they will be branded "leftists" and subjected to Red-baiting by the International.

In the coming years U.A.W. reformers must solve those problems and work toward organizing a showdown in the 1987 contract negotiations. As the clock ticks away, there will be fewer and fewer auto workers left to turn the union around. As Pete Kelly, lone dissenting member of the national bargaining committee, said, "The greatest tragedy of the 1984 contract is that many of those who voted for it will not be around to say they are sorry." □

P.L.O. TUG OF WAR

Is It Arafat's Last Battle?

JIM RUPERT

Tunis

Two years after the Israeli Army pushed Yasir Arafat off center stage in the Middle Eastern political drama, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad is trying to write Arafat's final exit. He is striving to oust Arafat as leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization and has such a firm grip on the P.L.O.'s militant wing that Arafat seems to have only one recourse: to allow the P.L.O. to split in two.

In the spring of last year, after Arafat failed to agree on a joint Middle East diplomatic strategy with Jordan's King Hussein, Assad encouraged fighters of a militant element of the P.L.O. to rebel against Arafat in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. That December, the P.L.O. rebels and Syrian artillery pounded Arafat's final stronghold in Tripoli, Lebanon, and forced him to flee aboard a Greek ferry bound for this city. Recently the Syrian President won another round by blocking Arafat's campaign to reunify the P.L.O. and restore his uncontested control of the Palestinian movement.

Angered because he was ignored by the Reagan Administration's Middle East peace plan and its May 17, 1983, agreement with Israel and the government of Lebanese President Amin Gemayel, Assad intends to make himself indispensable to any future diplomatic efforts in the region. He could take an important step in that direction by toppling

Jim Rupert is a freelance writer based in Tunis who has written for The Washington Post.

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Arafat and taking command of the Palestinian movement.

If Arafat loses his organizational vehicle, he will not be a player in the Middle East chess game. Last July he worked out a tentative reconciliation between his mainstream Al-Fatah organization and the Democratic Alliance, representing four hard-line factions based in Damascus that had remained neutral in last year's mutiny in the Bekaa Valley. In return for promising the hard-liners a larger role in the P.L.O. leadership, Arafat won a valuable prize: their support for convening the Palestinians' parliament in exile, the Palestine National Council.

Holding such a meeting is Arafat's strategy in his duel with Assad. The Syrian-controlled militants are badly outvoted in the parliament, a broad-based mix which is composed of guerrilla leaders, professors, professionals and even a Catholic priest from East Jerusalem.

Arafat counts on his parliamentary majority not only to re-elect him as P.L.O. leader but to expel the mutineers, now assembled in a fractious group called the National Alliance. He also seeks a solid mandate that will enable him to work with Jordan in future talks with the United States, Israel and other countries leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. At its last meeting, in February 1983, the parliament approved the principle of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, but only *after* an independent Palestinian state is established.

The meeting Arafat had engineered was to be held in Algiers in September, but Assad, who can also count votes, blocked it. Shortly after the P.L.O.'s two most influential hard-line leaders, George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Nayef Hawatmeh of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, agreed to attend the meeting in Algiers, Assad informed them that if they did, he would expel them from Syria. The threat was potent, especially in the case of Habash, whose fighters are based exclusively in Syria and in territory it controls in the Bekaa Valley. Accordingly, in September, Habash informed Al-Fatah of his reluctance to participate in the session.

Assad also flew to Algiers to warn President Chadli Benjedid that he would be sponsoring the breakup of the P.L.O. if he hosted the meeting against Syrian wishes. "Benjedid was very sensitive to that argument," a diplomatic source here told me. Algeria feels threatened by the confederation treaty its neighbors Morocco and Libya signed on August 13, and Benjedid hopes Assad will act as a restraining influence on his ally, Libyan leader Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. For both those reasons, Benjedid bowed to Syrian pressure and postponed the parliamentary session indefinitely.

With no prospect that Algeria or the Soviet Union will convince Assad to relent, Arafat has one significant option left: convening the parliament unilaterally. To do that he needs the support of two-thirds of the 384 delegates, which his aides say he has.

Since August, Arafat has been hopscotching across the Arab world in search of a site for the meeting. He has even promised to convene the parliament on board a ship if he cannot find a hospitable government. According to aides, his travels produced offers from Jordan, North Yemen, Morocco, Iraq and even Iran. But all the invitations posed problems for Arafat: either they came with strings attached or else acceptance would mean alienating one or another Arab state.

Jordan, which would have provided the most natural alternative to Algeria, poses special difficulties because of King Hussein's recent recognition of Egypt. Even though Arafat himself has embraced Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, many Palestinians, including staunch Arafat loyalists, are so opposed to such contact that they would refuse to meet in Amman.

By holding the meeting at all, whatever its location, Arafat would invite Syrian retaliation. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara told Al-Fatah officials in September that if Arafat convenes the parliament, Syria will hold a rival meeting in Damascus. That would finally divide the P.L.O. and spawn something not seen for more than a decade—a formal battle over who is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

On the other hand, by calling the parliament session unilaterally and allowing the Syrian-dominated hard-liners to break away, Arafat would be left in charge of a smaller and more malleable P.L.O. which he might more easily lead into serious talks with Jordan aimed at forging a Middle East peace. Assad, however, would remain well placed to thwart any joint P.L.O.-Jordanian peace initiative. With such potent tools as his influence over P.L.O. hard-liners, his power in Lebanon and his close ties with Iran, Assad will keep trying to wreck any diplomatic moves that ignore Syrian interests.

Arafat has received no visible support from his traditional Arab backers—Saudi Arabia and the other Persian Gulf states—for his attempt to challenge Damascus. The gulf states, especially vulnerable to destabilization, are loath to

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invite Syria's wrath by helping Arafat. Pro-Arafat Palestinian officials expect that they and leaders of moderate Arab states would become targets of a Syrian-sponsored terror campaign if Arafat was to defy Assad with their support. The Syrian leader would not shy away from such tactics: he has sponsored the building of a headquarters for leading Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal in Damascus and has sheltered Black Septembrists and other violent Palestinians there.

The fundamental problem facing Arafat and the entire Palestinian movement is that since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Middle East *Realpolitik* will not permit them even the limited independence they once exercised. Whether on the battlefield or at the negotiating table, the P.L.O. must enter the fray as someone else's baggage.

The Damascus-based hard-liners won't be budged from their alliance with Syria, whose militant rhetoric fits their view that the organization must continue the military struggle against Israel. Syria will permit the hard-liners to act only in accordance with its own interests, however. For example, it has barred any attack on Israel from its soil.

For all his claims of a victory in Beirut, Arafat no longer believes in the utility of military action and places his hopes on diplomacy for achieving a Palestinian state on the West Bank. Even diplomatically, his scope is limited. Although he claims to be defending "the independence of Palestinian decision-making," his options are narrowly defined by self-interested Arab governments. Arafat and the hard-liners accuse each other of surrendering Palestinian independence, but in reality, the P.L.O. has always relied to some extent on the support of other Arab regimes.

Arafat is having trouble finding a patron to help him defy Assad, and his time is running out. If he cannot gain independent control over at least part of the P.L.O., he will be denied a role in the next round of Middle East maneuvering, following the hiatus for the Israeli and U.S. elections. Even if he uses his considerable personal energy and political skill to keep a Palestinian apparatus breathing, he will remain irrelevant to the Middle East until one of the other Arab players decides to make him otherwise. □

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This just-published booklet by author William A. Reuben identifies 114 factual errors in the Federal District Court of New York's 1982 decision upholding Hiss's conviction for perjury in 1950. This flawed decision, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1983, stands as the last legal word on one of the most celebrated cases in modern history. 1 copy $5, 10 copies $40, 50 copies $150, 100 copies $250. Make checks payable to The Nation Institute and send to "Hiss," The Nation Institute, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

BOLIVIA'S MORATORIUM

One Answer to The Debt Crisis

CAROL WISE

Can a small Latin American country formally refuse to pay its private foreign debt without incurring the wrath of the world bankers? So far, Bolivia is proving that it can.

In May, the center-left Democratic and Popular Unity Coalition (U.D.P.) government of President Hernán Siles Zuazo announced it would no longer make interest and amortization payments, thus becoming the first in Latin America to declare a unilateral moratorium. Siles was under intense pressure from organized labor, and his action anticipated the outcome of the economic summit held in London in June and of the Cartagena, Colombia, meeting of Latin American debtors convened shortly thereafter.

Like many small poor countries in the region, Bolivia opposes the lenders' case-by-case approach to restructuring debt, which was reaffirmed in London and Cartagena, and instead favors the formation of a bloc to deal with the international bankers. The weaker nations know that whatever the diagnosis in their case, the cure—restructuring—will inevitably require the intervention of the International Monetary Fund, which will impose painful austerity measures designed to reduce domestic demand dramatically. At Cartagena, Mexico and Brazil successfully championed the I.M.F. model, which they have scrupulously followed, against the sentiment of the smaller nations for some kind of debt cartel. Their fidelity has been rewarded by the banks with extended repayment periods and reductions in commission payments and interest spreads.

The I.M.F., which adheres to a fairly strict brand of monetarism, requires a country to bring its international balance of payments and its domestic accounts out of the red before the fund will issue its "seal of approval," on

Carol Wise is a doctoral student in political science at Columbia University. She spent the summer working at the Central Bank of Bolivia, with funding from the Inter-American Foundation.

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which banks base their decisions for debt renegotiation. That approach, which has much in common with Reaganomics, is supported enthusiastically by the present Administration in Washington, even though U.S. budgetary and foreign trade deficits are wildly out of control. The Siles government, which had the bad luck to be elected during the first severe stage of the debt crisis, in 1982, contends that its private debt is too small to be subjected to the I.M.F. shock treatment. Moreover, its economy is in so perilous a state that such measures would be an act of political and economic overkill. The nation's gross national product registered a 20 percent drop between 1980 and 1982, and per capita consumption fell 36 percent in the same period.

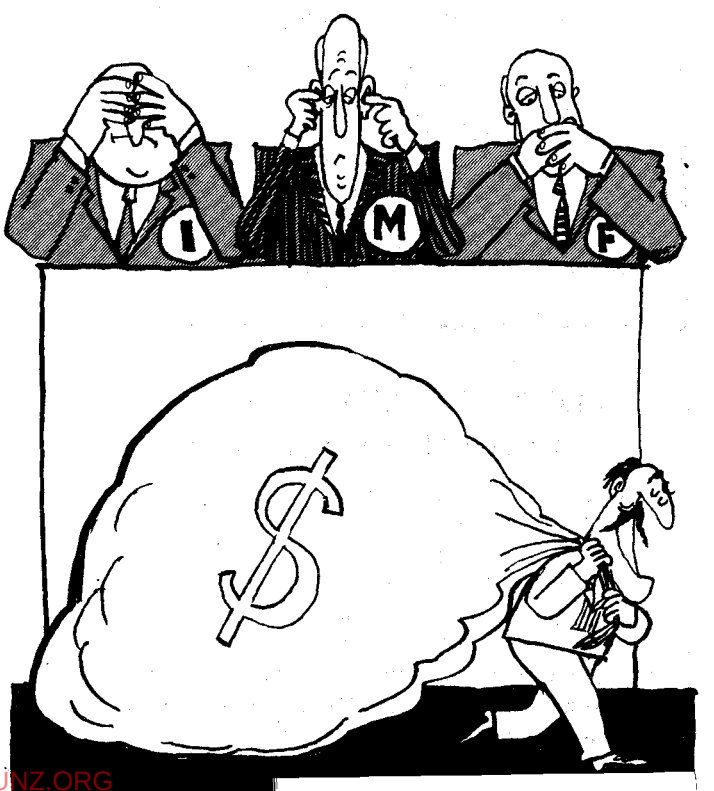
By its May action the Siles government in effect told the consortium of 128 banks with which it must renegotiate its debts, All right, treat us as an individual case rather than automatically bringing in the I.M.F. Although the banks have so far ignored that demand, Bolivia can make a plausible argument for not having to undergo the I.M.F. purge. First, its entire debt is comparatively minuscule—$5.3 billion, or 0.85 percent of the entire Third World debt. Second, its private debt makes up less than 20 percent of its total overseas debt; in Chile, Mexico and Brazil that proportion is around 80 percent. The bulk of Bolivia's borrowed funds have come from multilateral lenders such as the Inter-American Development Bank or from other governments, at lower interest rates and longer payback periods than private banks give. And because most of those loans are tied up in specific development projects, they are not readily siphoned off into Miami bank accounts by corrupt officials.

Bolivia is seeking to restructure a private debt of $720 million, small potatoes by Latin American standards, and it is not willing to push its economic indicators down even further in order to do so. The U.D.P. is hardly the first government to criticize international finance for failing to provide alternative payback schemes to countries that did not partake heavily of the easy credit that flowed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The severe drop in demand for primary exports in the industrialized countries has pushed many of the small raw-materials producers back into dependence on just one or two exports. Bolivia relies almost solely on tin and natural gas for survival. As the cost of the country's debt service rapidly approaches parity with total export earnings, the I.M.F./Reaganomics policy of inducing a recession in order to provoke a recovery is becoming merely academic. Most Latin Americans feel that with the economic depression, they have already taken their medicine and that a restructuring of the external debt on more favorable terms is the most direct and obvious path to economic recovery.

Politically speaking, the Siles government is in no shape to handle the social turmoil that I.M.F. austerity often produces: for example, riots such as those that occurred in the Dominican Republic last spring. Bolivia's economic crisis is preceded by a long history of coups and military corruption, not to mention six changes of regime between 1978 and 1980. As soon as it came to power, the U.D.P. fell into disarray. Heavy infighting broke out between Siles's reformed Revolutionary National Movement of the 1950s and the various forces that since 1982 have crystallized in the Revolutionary Leftist Movement under the leadership of Vice President Jaime Paz. In short, Bolivia does not have the institutional stability of Brazil or Mexico to help it bring off the prescribed austerity measures. That was made most evident in the June 30 coup attempt—a traditional Latin American plot involving the temporary kidnapping of the President by a so-called secret civilian-military society (the Saravia-Galindo plot for a Second Republic).

When it became apparent earlier this year that the private banks were not going to budge on renegotiation without an I.M.F. agreement, the U.D.P. tried halfheartedly to stabilize the economy. On April 13, price controls and supports were lifted on a long list of state-subsidized commodities and services, and the peso was devalued by 75 percent. Predictably, the move provoked the wrath of the powerful Bolivian Workers' Central (C.O.B.), the country's major labor federation. Through a series of hunger demonstrations and national strikes, the C.O.B. forced the government to restore a number of state subsidies and in early July signed a formal accord with the U.D.P. calling for indefinite suspension of payments on the private bank debt.

According to Armando Morales, secretary of the C.O.B.'s economic commission, it would take a "Pinochet-type" solution to implement the usual package of I.M.F. austerity measures, and there exists no political will for such a strategy in Bolivia. The C.O.B.'s position is that Bolivia will begin cleaning up its economy and attacking its budget deficits as soon as the Reagan Administration does the same. The labor federation contends that the projected $200 bil-



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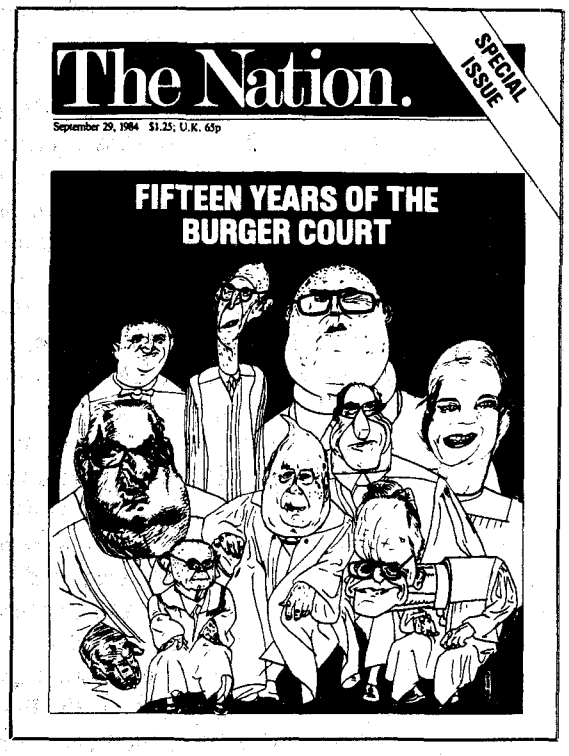

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lion deficit in the United States is the primary cause of the onerously high interest rates Latin American countries are paying.

Although the Bolivian decision to go it alone elicited the usual "confidential memorandum" from the international banks' debt steering committee threatening various economic sanctions, the local private sector has been surprisingly compliant on the debt issue. The Private Business Confederation would like to see the government take a more moderate stance—perhaps limiting annual interest payments to 25 percent of export earnings rather than halting them altogether. Bolivia's creditors gave it a ninety-day respite before payments were to be resumed. They threatened to impose trade and investment curbs, but no sanctions have been imposed yet. The Inter-American Development Bank and the European Economic Community continue to pour funds into the economy for various projects. The U.S. Agency for International Development, the largest and most obstinate of the bilateral lenders, says it has no intention of leaving Bolivia in the short or long term. According to one senior development officer, A.I.D. feels its Bolivian mission has been far too successful to abandon. The agency takes particular pride in a drive it sponsored against cocaine traffickers and in the implementation of its substitute-crop program under which farmers raising coca are encouraged to switch to other crops.

Having seen the writing on the wall last March, the Bank of America made a last-ditch effort to recover the approximately $60 million that Bolivia owes it. The bank offered to lend the Argentine government $150 million to cover part of that country's debt to Bolivia for natural gas, on the condition that the Bolivians use the funds to cover their own debt with Bank of America's La Paz branch. The plan fell through, adding momentum to the go-it-alone movement; even the I.M.F. rejected the proposal, saying it was not in Bolivia's best interests and it discriminated against other foreign banks.

The banks' relatively light exposure in Bolivia is probably the reason for the absence of economic retaliation, the threat of which has deterred small debtors from uniting in a cartel. As the private consortia remain preoccupied with big borrowers like Argentina, Mexico and Brazil, the weaker, less debt-ridden Latin American states are anxiously watching to see what will happen to a little guy who refuses to play by the I.M.F.'s rules. □

'Yellow Rain'

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

In a speech in West Berlin, Secretary Haig claimed that the United States possessed "physical evidence from Southeast Asia" containing "abnormally high levels of three potent mycotoxins—poisonous substances not indig-

Erik Guyot worked in Thailand from 1982 to 1983 and is the Washington director of the Campaign Against Military Intervention in the Philippines.

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enous to the region." The physical evidence he mentioned consisted of two fragments of a single leaf weighing 0.4 grams. The mycotoxins were present in minuscule quantities.

Despite two State Department white papers and numerous statements by officials aimed at swaying public opinion in this country and abroad, the allegations regarding the use of yellow rain remain unproved. Indeed, after a sustained assault from scientists, journalists and other investigators, the evidence seems as fragile as Secretary Haig's leaf sample.

The U.S. government's evidence is of three kinds: scientific data procured in Southeast Asia, consisting of organic material allegedly contaminated by mycotoxins, as well as blood and tissue specimens from people allegedly exposed to them; refugee reports; and information from secret intelligence sources. Since much doubt has been cast on evidence in the first two categories, the State Department has come to rely increasingly on that in the third, which is not subject to public scrutiny.

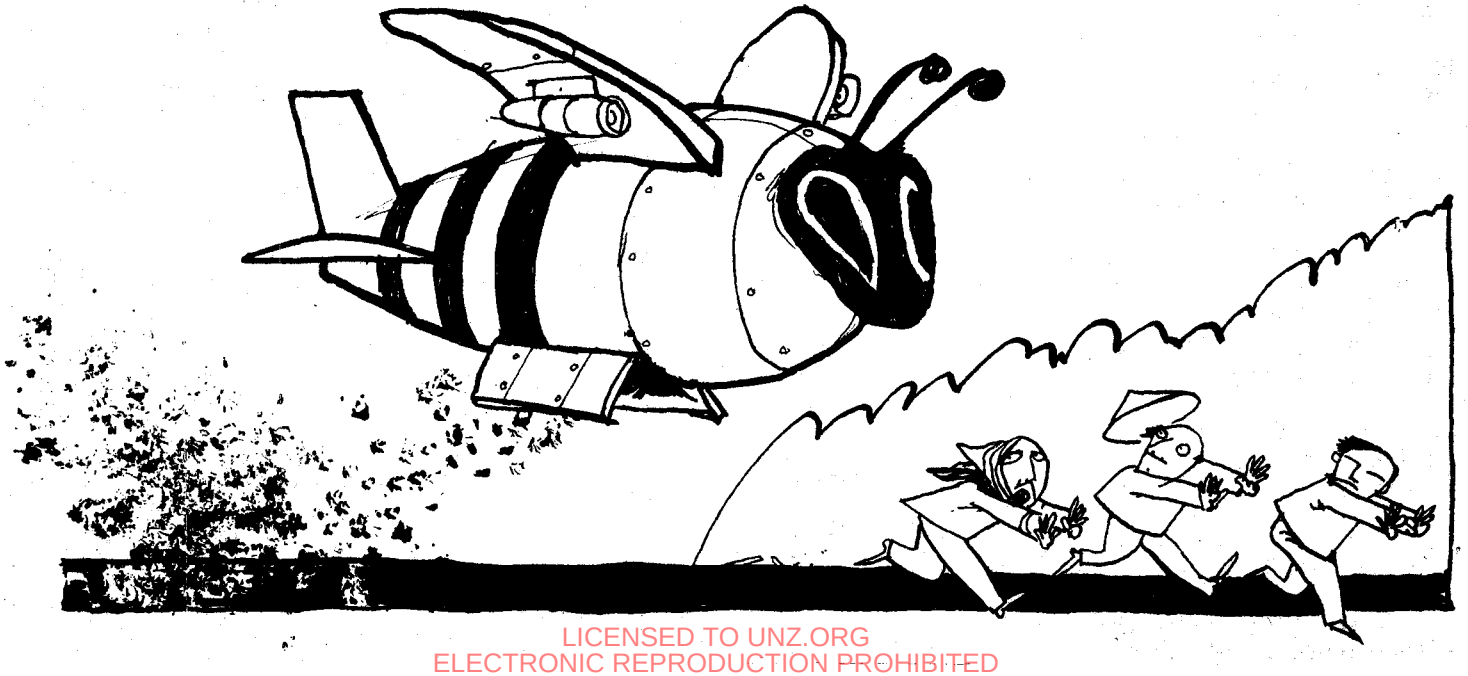
Scientific Evidence

Although the department claims that the United States obtained more than 350 samples from sites of alleged chemical attack, independent scientists have often been thwarted in their attempts to examine them. For months after the Haig speech, the department refused to divulge the source of the samples or the level of toxins found in them. The truth is that in only five of the government's environmental samples—comprising leaf fragments, scrapings from rocks and pond water—was the presence of toxins indicated by laboratory tests, and the accuracy of those tests has been questioned. Those five samples—the State Department's "smoking gun" of a massive Soviet chemical warfare campaign—have a combined weight of less than a large aspirin, 500 milligrams.

The tests were conducted by a single facility, a private laboratory run by Chester Mirocha of the University of Minnesota. No one has been able to confirm them. The sample in which Mirocha reported finding the highest level of toxins was analyzed a year later by the Army's Chemical Research and Development Center at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland, and no toxins were detected. After testing more than eighty other samples, the Army lab has yet to find any toxins. U.N., Canadian and Australian laboratories have also been unable to detect toxins in their own yellow-rain samples.

The State Department tried to discredit those independent tests by pointing out that analyzing mycotoxins is difficult and requires highly sophisticated techniques. Yet Mirocha's methods have yielded questionable results. When he analyzed the two halves of the leaf sample mentioned by Haig, he found different amounts and ratios of toxins in each. Another of the five samples he tested, obtained at the same alleged attack site as the leaf, did not contain two of the toxins reportedly found in the leaf sample. (Mirocha declined to answer any questions regarding his research.)

An issue now partially superseded by doubts regarding Mirocha's results is whether the toxins detected in the environmental samples could be natural contaminants. These mycotoxins are the natural byproducts of several species of Fusarium fungi, which are often associated with moldy grain. The question is whether the levels and combinations of toxins reportedly found in the samples could have occurred naturally in Southeast Asia or only in Soviet laboratories. Contrary to what the government originally said, the Fusarium fungi are found in Southeast Asia. The State Department contends that since control samples of various materials from the region did not contain mycotoxins, the poisons must have come from outside the area. Lois Ember of *Chemical and Engineering News* discovered that only nine control samples were offered in evidence, and all of them had been unscientifically collected. Lieut. Col. Charles Lane, who was assistant Army attaché in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1980 to 1983 and was responsible for gathering much of the evidence on yellow rain, described to me how some of the control samples were obtained: "Basically, my Thai counterpart asked the Khmer Rouge to produce some rice, water and things. Twenty minutes later I was given a bag of rice and some water."



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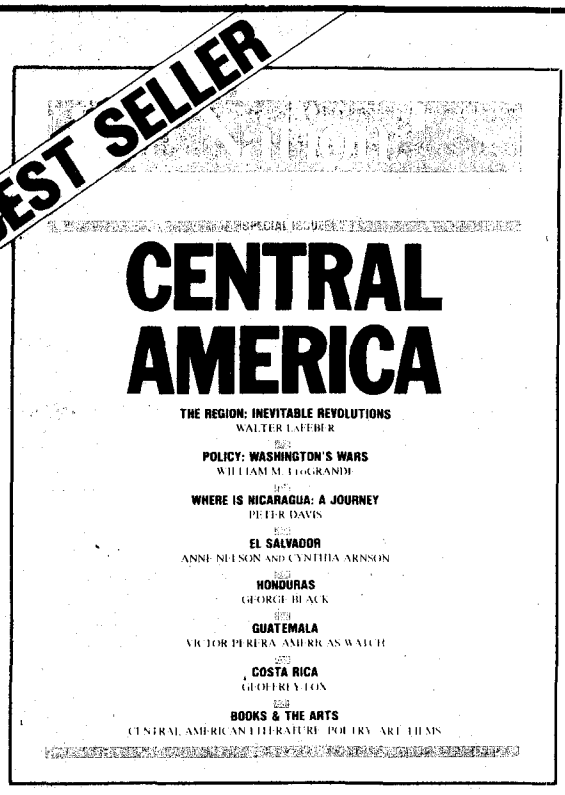

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Only one independently obtained and tested sample has been reported to contain mycotoxins. Acquired by ABC News, it was analyzed by Joseph Rosen of Rutgers University. Rosen also claimed to have discovered the synthetic chemical solvent polyethylene glycol (PEG) in the sample, which, the State Department contends, is further confirmation that yellow rain is not of natural origin. No other laboratory has confirmed Rosen's finding of PEG. Furthermore, according to Cyrus Levinthal of Columbia University's biology department, since PEG is an extremely common substance in rubber and plastic products and in detergents, the ABC News sample could have been contaminated either during its collection or in the laboratory. "In my lab," Levinthal told me, "if a student came up finding PEG, I would tell him to go clean his glassware."

All the government's samples could have been contaminated because of the uncontrolled manner in which they were collected and analyzed. Colonel Lane says that virtually every purported yellow-rain sample, no matter how bizarre, was routinely accepted in Washington with no questions asked about its provenance. Of the five positive environmental samples, two came from the Khmer Rouge, according to Lane, while the mercenary magazine *Soldier of Fortune* claims responsibility for producing one sample from Laos.

Because State Department officials refuse to specify how those samples were found—to "protect our methods and sources and other assets," they say—intentional contamination cannot be ruled out. In 1982 a U.N. team investigating charges of chemical warfare in Southeast Asia reported that a refugee leader in Thailand made a crude attempt to deceive it with a sample composed of sand and insecticide.

The remaining scientific evidence adduced by the government, blood and tissue specimens taken from alleged victims, reportedly contain trace amounts of mycotoxins. The centerpiece is Mirocha's analysis of tissue samples from a dead Khmer Rouge soldier. But Huguette Cohen, a research scientist with the Canadian government who accepts the State Department's allegations that the Communists used yellow rain, recently analyzed samples from the same tissues and found no toxins. Of the approximately one hundred blood samples drawn from alleged victims, only twenty were reported positive for mycotoxins. All came from Mirocha's lab.

Furthermore, many scientists are puzzled that mycotoxins could be detected in blood from refugees who were supposedly exposed to yellow rain weeks before the samples were taken. Even the State Department admits in its November 1982 white paper that "most of the toxin would normally be expected to be excreted within 48 hours of exposure." The department gets around that difficulty by making the unsupported assertion that the mycotoxins are stored in certain body tissues and released later.

A stir was caused last spring when Matthew Meselson, a Harvard University biochemist, and Thomas Seeley, a Yale University biologist, contended that yellow rain might be the feces of honeybees. Seeley is an expert on bees, and Meselson has been a consultant on chemical warfare to the

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State Department, the Defense Department and other government agencies for more than twenty years. If there actually were mycotoxins in the samples of yellow rain, Meselson and Seeley suggest, they would have been caused by Fusarium fungi growing on the pollen in the bee feces. Canadian and Thai investigators discovered that most of the material in the yellow rain is pollen. They reached that conclusion by using a microscope, an instrument the government scientists inexplicably failed to employ. Every sample Meselson, the Canadians and others examined with a microscope, including the ABC News sample, was practically identical to bee feces in color, pollen content and general weight. Some contained bee hairs. In a May article in *Nature*, Meselson and Joan Nowicke, a pollen expert with the Smithsonian Institution, concluded that because the pollen in bee droppings comes from a variety of local plants and because no two spots of yellow rain are exactly alike, the yellow matter brought in by the Hmong is probably bee feces.

Moreover, while collecting specimens in Thailand, Meselson, Seeley and Phongthep Akratanakul, a bee expert at Kasetsart University in Thailand, were caught in a five-minute shower of bee feces. A swarm of bees flying too high to be seen splattered them and their Land-Rover. They counted more than 200 yellow droppings per square yard over a large area. Such showers are the result of periodic bee cleansing flights and can last up to five minutes, covering large areas. They occur primarily in the dry season, the period in which most yellow rain attacks are reported. Meselson and Seeley suggest that the showers are the source of the yellow rain described by the Hmong refugees. When shown leaves splattered with bee feces, many of the refugees remarked, "Chemie," one local term for chemical warfare agents.

Refugee Accounts

Refugee accounts have figured prominently in State Department claims that yellow rain is being employed by the Pathet Lao (assisted by the Vietnamese and the Russians) in a genocidal campaign intended to punish the Hmong for their support of the Americans during the Vietnam War. On examination, however, many of those accounts collapse under their own weight.

It should first be pointed out that the Hmong did not unanimously back the American war effort. U.S. saturation bombing and herbicide attacks designed to drive civilians out of Pathet Lao areas polarized an already divided Hmong community. Approximately one-third of the 300,000 Hmong in Laos banded together with other ethnic minorities to form the backbone of the Pathet Lao forces. Another one-third sided with the C.I.A.-financed "secret army" under the leadership of Gen. Vang Pao. The remaining Hmong were neutral. After the Pathet Lao victory in 1975, Vang Pao and some of his supporters fled to Thailand. Others from the secret army resisted from the remote Phu Bia region until their defeat by Laotian and Vietnamese forces in 1979. Those forces are the prime source of stories about yellow rain.

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Practically all the stories emanate from two refugee camps run by former officers of Vang Pao's army; significantly, no accounts of yellow rain have originated in three smaller Hmong camps which are not controlled by the officers. (Khmer Rouge accounts, which began only after the Hmong reports were widely publicized, are generally suspect.)

At the two main Hmong camps, Ban Vinai and Nong Khai, almost all interviews with alleged victims, whether conducted by representatives of the United States, the United Nations or the press, were monitored by the camp hierarchy. The bulk of the U.S. government's accounts were gathered by Colonel Lane and a State Department officer between 1979 and 1983. According to Lane, if the camp leader was not present, "the interpreter, who was number three or four in the [camp] echelon, would be there." Due to time pressures, there was no standard procedure for cross-checking accounts of members of the same village or even the same family, he told me. The two had no alternative but to question some 130 refugees on a part-time basis.

Christina Szanton, an anthropologist at Columbia University and a specialist on Thai culture, did cross-check the stories, however. She concluded that they "lacked internal consistency." Szanton faults the interviewers for not being aware that "there is a real potential for distortion when asking classical leading questions of preselected interviewees." Compounding the problem is the fact that such questions are asked "in the presence of the Hmong leadership, which is psychologically committed to perpetuating yellow rain stories." Szanton emphasizes that while she does not think the Hmong are lying, when they are aware an authority figure desires particular information, "they will give what they feel is the appropriate response." Lane acknowledges that with the early reports, "trying to make sense out of these things was incredible. You had [stories of] large magnets pulling guns out of people's hands [and] huge rifles which were simply impossible."

An example of the exaggerations that have occurred in the rumor-ridden Ban Vinai camp was provided by Roger Rumpf and Jacqui Chagnon, members of the American Friends Service Committee who worked in Laos from 1978 to 1981 and are fluent in Lao. In early 1983, while conducting a six-week investigation of yellow rain both in Laos and in the refugee camps, they interviewed a husband and wife separately. The husband, who had fought against the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese in the post-1975 resistance, said he had witnessed numerous chemical warfare attacks by Soviet planes which had caused many deaths. As evidence, he pointed to a skin rash on his hand. Camp doctors told Rumpf and Chagnon that they were treating him for ringworm. The man's wife, who said she was with him throughout the resistance, said she had not seen yellow rain or planes or dying people, only some yellow powder on the ground, which she said she believed had caused another family to become ill.

The United Nations' investigating team reported that while it had "no reason to doubt the integrity" of the people it had interviewed, "there were clear discrepancies" in their accounts. It noted:

> In many cases, the persons involved only heard the passage of an aircraft but did not visually observe the aircraft. A few testimonials only referred to the sudden appearance of yellow spots without mentioning of [*sic*] any aircraft or other delivery system. Very few of those interviewed claimed to have observed actual dissemination of material from an aircraft.

Even Colonel Lane regards the refugee accounts as circumstantial evidence at best. Although he believes that "something very odd is going on out there," after three years of collecting evidence, he says, "The jury is still out."

The State Department's claim that attacks of yellow rain are part of a Communist genocide plan is also contradicted by the fact that many Hmong leaders who had joined the Pathet Lao hold important posts in the Laotian government and military, while also wielding considerable power on the provincial level. In the Plain of Jars region, where the majority of the attacks are alleged to have taken place, the provincial chairman, the military and police commanders, and other officials are all Hmong.

Furthermore, none of the scores of persons who oversee foreign-aid projects in Laos have confirmed reports of yellow rain. Rumpf and Chagnon say emphatically, "We never heard any firsthand stories, nor did anyone working in the foreign community, including the American Embassy, Swedish, Dutch, Australian and U.N. personnel." Australian sociologist Grant Evans, accompanied by John Hanoush, the political affairs officer at the Australian Embassy, tracked down accounts of yellow rain in Laos and concluded, in his book *The Yellow Rainmakers*, that they were based on "idle rumor and speculation."

Last year Rumpf and Chagnon interviewed dozens of Hmong from more than ten villages, all alleged attack sites. The stories they were told directly contradict those of former Vang Pao soldiers in Ban Vinai. Surprisingly, a few of the Hmong, including a Pathet Lao government official, said they had seen yellow rain but firmly denied that aircraft or other military equipment was involved in its dissemination. One Hmong government official, who stated that "yellow poison is real and kills," considered it a puzzling health problem of unknown origin. Clearly, government officials were not attempting to cover up the possible use of chemical weapons.

Laotian medical personnel and some Western physicians working in refugee camps say that deaths caused by a combination of poor sanitary conditions and widespread disease are attributed to yellow rain because of superstitions and people's memories of American toxic spraying. The Hmong, like other anamistic Southeast Asian peoples, often attribute disease to supernatural causes. "For the Hmong," says Szanton, "memories are kept through mythmaking and oral traditions. Since much of their life has been influenced by things coming from the sky, it is not surprising that the Hmong now associate illness and yellow spots on vegetation with passing aircraft."

The Hmong live in the most heavily bombed country in

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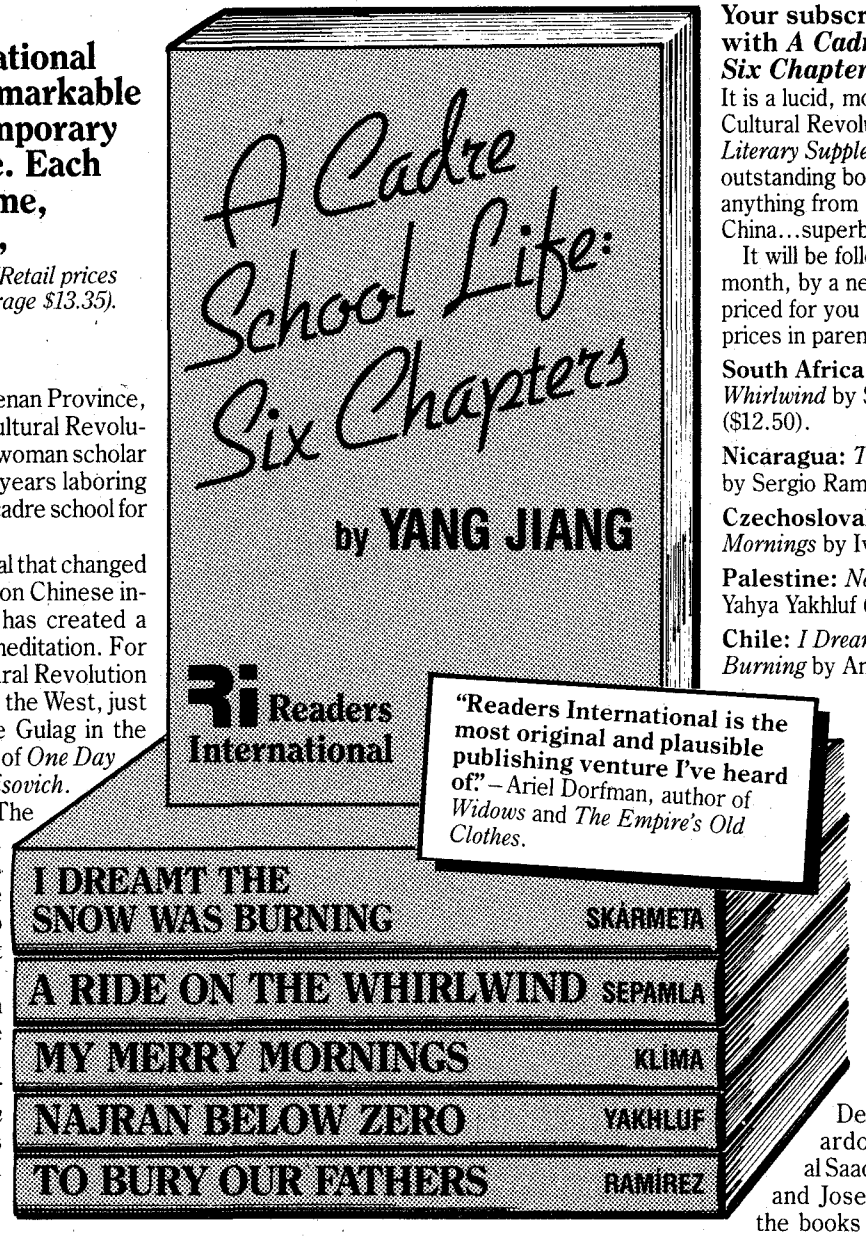
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recent history. From 1964 to 1973 U.S. aircraft dropped approximately 300,000 tons of bombs on the Plain of Jars—an estimated two tons of bombs for every person living there. According to the recently declassified Air Force study "Operation Ranch Hand," between 1965 and 1969 more than 160,000 acres in northern Laos were sprayed with almost 400,000 gallons of Agent Orange. Back then, Laotians used the term "yellow rain" to refer to American defoliants. A Hmong supporter of the Pathet Lao told Rumpf and Chagnon that U.S. planes sprayed "chemical poison" which destroyed rice, produced symptoms like those currently reported and killed fifteen people. A Hmong supporter of Vang Pao described to *National Geographic* a spraying that destroyed an opium crop and resulted in several deaths in 1972 or 1973. Also influencing the outlook of some Hmong are Radio Free Asia and Voice of America broadcasts. One Hmong in Laos told Rumpf and Chagnon that a 1982 Radio Free Asia broadcast attributed 16,000 deaths to yellow rain.

The State Department and most of the media have a selective memory when it comes to those earlier refugee claims of illness and death due to American chemical agents. If Hmong refugee accounts cited by the State Department are to be believed, eyewitness testimony of earlier alleged chemical attacks must be dealt with.

Intelligence Information

As the credibility of the State Department's scientific evidence and refugee accounts weakened, officials took to claiming that the United States had other confirmation, from "national technical sources." Thus, Col. James Leonard of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs has asserted: "This is not a scientific problem of the first order. It is basically an arms control monitoring function, which is an intelligence function . . . and a forensic science function."

Officials are loath to discuss this other information. The government has alluded to interceptions of radio broadcasts by Laotian pilots describing chemical attacks, but no transcripts have been released. Accounts by defectors have also been discredited. The star defector, a Laotian pilot, is now quietly ignored. He claimed that he had fired rockets containing toxic gas on Hmong villages, but his description of the procedures used indicated conventional rockets rather than those equipped to deliver chemical weapons. An article in *Far Eastern Economic Review* of January 1982 reported that the U.S. Air Force attaché who debriefed the pilot doubted his story.

Another defector, a Vietnamese artillery officer who claimed he had fired chemical shells in Kampuchea, retracted his story and complained in writing to an interviewer that "promise[s] . . . that I would be allowed to go to the U.S. if I worked with them" were not kept. Exasperated military and civilian officials could not determine which part of his story was fabrication and which was not. Colonel Lane told me that after several interviews, "he was told, 'O.K., this time when you go in there, don't lie; tell the truth.' But he still lied."

No spent chemical warfare munitions containing mycotoxins have ever been found in Southeast Asia, and military experts doubt the feasibility of such attacks. Based on the low proportion of toxins in the samples—less than 0.02 percent—scientists estimate it would take more than one pound of yellow rain to kill one person. Saul Hormats, who spent thirty-seven years designing and testing chemical agents until he retired as chief engineer in the Army's Manufacturing Technology Directorate at Edgewood Arsenal, told me:

> There isn't a damn bit of military value to it. At minimum, about 3,000 tons of yellow rain would be required to attack a village. To place this quantity on target would require 20,000 to 30,000 shells—some two hours of fire from a full Soviet division—or a minimum of 8,000 bombs dropped from the air.

To explain its inability to produce toxin-carrying projectiles from Southeast Asia, government officials maintain that entry into Laos and Kampuchea is almost impossible. Yet they routinely hand out kits for collecting yellow-rain samples to the Hmong, who have brought in hundreds of items ranging from leaves splattered with bee feces to balloon-borne propaganda pamphlets from Taiwan. Extensive private initiatives have also turned up nothing: a rocket purchased for $10,000 by an Australian television crew was later shown to be a fake, and *Soldier of Fortune*'s offer of a $100,000 reward to the first Laotian pilot to defect with gas rockets has yet to be claimed.

Given the extensive U.S. involvement in unofficial investigative activities with the Khmer Rouge and Vang Pao forces, the lack of an official investigation by the most logical source, the U.S. Embassy in Laos, is curious, to say the least. Although it is the only U.S. Embassy in Indochina, it is almost never mentioned by the State Department and has not issued a public report on yellow rain. If a genocidal campaign is being waged in Laos, embassy personnel would seem to be the ideal people to gather evidence and check out refugee accounts. Instead, all the evidence comes from Vang Pao-controlled camps, Khmer Rouge camps, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok and government circles in Washington.

Four resolutions condemning Soviet use of yellow rain were introduced in Congress during the last session—an easy way to appear tough on the Russians in an election year. In February the Senate passed by unanimous voice vote a resolution stating, "The Soviet Union is engaged in the use and/or provision of chemical warfare agents in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan." The lack of dissent on the issue is astonishing given the paucity of solid evidence. Twenty years ago Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution on the basis of "obvious" Vietnamese attacks and thereby paved the way for escalating U.S. military programs. Then, at least, there were two dissenters. Before Congress again accepts the State Department's story on yellow rain it should heed the words of Saul Hormats: "Has Congress been misled, and if so, by whom?" □

Note: Alexander Cockburn will comment on the media's handling of the yellow-rain story in an upcoming issue.
—The Editors

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

'Architect of History'

LEONARD KRIEGEL

DOS PASSOS: A Life. *By Virginia Spencer Carr. Doubleday. 624 pp. $24.95.*

When he died in 1970 at the age of 74, John Roderigo Dos Passos had outlived his three most famous contemporaries, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner. Together, the four writers form as remarkable a quartet of novelists as this nation has produced in a single generation. Of the four, the literary reputation of Dos Passos has certainly taken the most dramatic turn for the worse. Every so often we are informed that a Dos Passos revival is imminent, but that oft-heralded rebirth has never come to pass. The truth is that the eclipse of Dos Passos's reputation had begun even before his great trilogy, *U.S.A.*, was published as a single volume in 1938. And by the time of his death, he was remembered mainly as the author of that work. *The Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature* accords Hemingway a six-page article signed by Philip Young; Faulkner receives almost as much attention in an article by Cleanth Brooks, while Fitzgerald and Dos Passos each receive an unsigned entry of less than a page.

Dos Passos is no better served by his latest biographer. Virginia Spencer Carr's *Dos Passos: A Life* is a dull book, which made me wonder why Carr chose to spend "seven years . . . immersed in the life and writings of John Dos Passos." On the other hand, Townsend Ludington's *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey*, which was published four years ago, remains a first-rate work for anyone interested in Dos Passos or in the fascinating subject of his relationship to the politics of our century.

According to the conspiracy theory espoused by such conservatives as Carr and William F. Buckley Jr., Dos Passos's reputation declined because he moved from the left-wing radicalism of the 1920s and 1930s to the Goldwater conservatism of the 1960s. But that assessment is facile. After all, among the novelists whose reputation was made by radical critics was Céline, whose politics make Dos Passos's at their most reactionary look tepid. Dos Passos sentimentalized Joe McCarthy; Céline praised Hitler. Dos Passos might have been nervous about Jews in Hollywood and the theater when he wrote *Most Likely to Succeed*, in 1952; Céline called for what was to become the Final Solution in *Bagatelles pour une massacre*, in 1937.

A more reasonable explanation for Dos Passos's literary fate is that his work began to sound, as Edmund Wilson wrote him in a letter, "like some of the messages from Mark Twain or Oscar Wilde that are supposed to be transmitted through mediums." Wilson was writing about Dos Passos's politics, but the remark is equally applicable to almost all the fiction he published after *U.S.A.*'s concluding volume, *The Big Money*, appeared in 1936.

After rereading a number of his novels, I find that it is the weaknesses that seem endemic even to his best writing that account for the failure to revive enthusiasm for his work. It is certainly hard to understand why, in 1938, Jean-Paul Sartre went so far as to label him "the greatest writer of our time." One wonders what Sartre made of that assessment by, say, 1968.

It remains difficult to think of Dos Passos as other than a political novelist. More than any of his contemporaries, he embraced the novel as a means to persuade—and to persuade in a political direction. A streak of political didacticism can be found even in *Three Soldiers* (1921) and *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), his best books. He conceived of the novelist as an "architect of history," a view that many readers now probably find quaint. Whatever his political changes, Dos Passos remains in many ways the quintessentially American writer.

Even his life seems characteristically American, although it was certainly unusual. Dos Passos was the illegitimate son of John Randolph Dos Passos and Lucy Addison Sprigg Madison. His father was one of the most successful corporate lawyers of his day, and in 1891 earned a fee of a half-million dollars for setting up the Sugar Trust for H.O. Havermeyer, reputedly the highest legal fee paid in America to that time. John Randolph Dos Passos was the son of a Portuguese shoemaker who had fled the island of Madeira, possibly after stabbing a man to death. Like so many children of immigrants, the elder Dos Passos was a passionate advocate of the American legal system, the capitalist economic system and the Anglo-Saxon spiritual system. A prolific writer himself, he outdid Kipling in his praise of Anglo-Saxon virtues. In *The Anglo-Saxon Century and the Unification of the English-Speaking People*, he called for "the successful Anglicization of the world." Dos Passos's mother had originally been married to a dissolute descendant of James Madison. She appears to have been an able, independent woman. After her husband deserted her, she went to work in her father's real estate office, and in 1883, the 29-year-old Lucy Addison Sprigg Madison met and became the mistress of the 38-year-old John Randolph Dos Passos. Thirteen years later, she bore him a son in a hotel room in Chicago. Because Dos Passos's wife, Mary Dyckman Hays Dos Passos, was a Catholic and the daughter of wealthy New York socialites who had helped him rise in the world of law, divorce was out of the question. The lovers could not marry until after Mary Hays's death, in 1910.

Dos Passos knew about the scandal of his birth. In *U.S.A.*, and later in the autobiographical *Chosen Country* (1951), his father is portrayed as strong but distant, the quixotic authority who must be pleased. At Choate, where his father, still disguised as his guardian, sent him in 1907, he was registered as John Roderigo Madison. He did not become John Roderigo Dos Passos until he entered Harvard University, in 1912. It is highly probable that both Dos Passos's early radicalism and the misanthropy of his early fiction derive from his relationship with his father, who was loving and energetic, but made furtive by convention. The two would meet in European and American hotels, where the boy spent a good many of his early years, but until Dos Passos was a senior at Choate, he did not have a father in any public sense.

At Harvard, Dos Passos was numbered among the esthetes, but he also appears to have discovered the dispos-

Leonard Kriegel is the author of Quitting Time *(Pantheon) and* Notes From the Two-Dollar Window *(Dutton).*

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sessed during those years. Whether his sympathy for the downtrodden grew out of psychological insecurity or was simply a young man's radical fling, his views, as well as his experience as an ambulance driver during World War I, belong to the coming-of-age of an entire literary generation. His reputation was founded on what he did with those experiences in *One Man's Initiation* (1920), in *Three Soldiers* and in *Manhattan Transfer*. *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos's war novel, and *Manhattan Transfer*, his New York novel, both hold up surprisingly well. The former has always seemed to me a better evocation of World War I than either Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* or E.E. Cummings's *The Enormous Room*.

Dos Passos was prolific throughout the 1920s. Chronicling the decade, he also helped establish *The New Masses*, led the fight to free Sacco and Vanzetti, helped found The New Playwrights Theatre and traveled extensively. While writing the novels that were to make up *U.S.A.*, Dos Passos worked as a labor reporter for *The New Republic*. (He was considered so far to the left that the editors there refused to allow him to cover the Gastonia textile strike of 1929.) Ironically, the only successful novel he wrote after 1936, *Midcentury*, is perhaps the most vitriolic attack on organized labor ever penned by an American novelist. Written in 1961, ostensibly out of Dos Passos's concern for "the plight of the rank and file union man who was being kicked around by the union bosses," it is a bleak, even despairing, picture of American life halfway through the twentieth century.

That book is indicative of the extent to which Dos Passos had come to embrace the political right. The heroic figures of *U.S.A.* are Charles Steinmetz, Eugene V. Debs and Thorstein Veblen; here the heroic figures are Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Senator John McClellan. Dos Passos, as Townsend Ludington writes, lived a life "noteworthy for its integrity." But his anticommunism grew so passionate and single-minded that he ultimately became enmeshed in a self-delusion that was quite simply amazing. By the 1960s, he was ready and willing to excuse virtually anyone as long as that person's anticommunist credentials were in order. In *Century's Ebb*, a novel published posthumously in 1975, his vision of patriotic heroism embraces figures such as Martin Dies, Joe McCarthy and J. Parnell Thomas. His support for Barry Goldwater in 1964 was quasi-religious. And had he lived, one suspects he would have found much to admire in Jesse Helms (though Dos Passos distrusted religious fundamentalism) and Roberto d'Aubuisson. It is one thing to write for *The National Review*, as Dos Passos did; it is quite another for a grown man to find his view of reality confirmed there.

Dos Passos had already become suspicious of the communists by the time he finished *The Big Money*. He nevertheless continued to find Marxism a useful tool for examining society until he went to Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Like Orwell, he rebelled against a world in which truth was mandated by imprimatur rather than events. When his good friend the socialist Juan Robles was murdered by the communists—a murder that was implicitly defended by those, like Hemingway, who wanted to stay in political fashion—his break with the orthodox communist left became final. As the 1930s came to an end, Dos Passos arrived at a political position similar to that of his friends Edmund Wilson and James T. Farrell: he became an independent socialist. But neither Wilson nor Farrell ever made a comparable move to the extreme right. Indeed, over the next three decades, Wilson questioned his friend's politics in letter after letter. Dos Passos's politics, he insisted, had turned him into "a hot-air artist"; by supporting Goldwater, he had aligned himself with "one of the biggest asses in our asinine country." But Wilson also recognized Dos Passos's strange political consistency: liberals had always been his enemies. In 1964, he wrote Dos Passos, "You've been railing against 'the liberals' all your life. . . . You used to assail this myth from the radical side and now you assail it from the conservative."

After *U.S.A.*, Dos Passos published nine novels. He also published a memoir, books of reportage, popular histories and travel books. The decline in his power as a novelist should be evident to anyone who reads the novels he wrote during the last three decades of his life. Other than *Midcentury* and perhaps *Chosen Country*, they are mediocre, even embarrassing at times. For example, *Most Likely to Succeed* (1954) and *The Great Days* (1958) are sloppy and overwhelmed by the author's didacticism. In *U.S.A.*, the narrative was politicized, but it was not overwhelmed.

To claim that Dos Passos left his talent on the banks of the Ebro in 1937 is simply the left's version of a critical conspiracy theory. The truth is that his novelistic weaknesses simply grew more apparent as his politics grew more reactionary. What he achieved in *U.S.A.* was all he was capable of achieving. He never had the ability to create truly memorable characters. Even in *U.S.A.*, most of the invented characters seem two-dimensional. And as he grew older, his dialogue became increasingly clichéd.

By the time his second trilogy, *District of Columbia*, was finished in 1949, his deficiencies as a novelist were clear. Even *Chosen Country*, which met with a positive critical reception, is a failure. It is interesting to look at it alongside *Across the River and into the Trees*, generally considered Hemingway's poorest novel, which was published around the same time. If anything, *Chosen Country* is a worse performance because Hemingway at least manages to salvage something from his aging-warrior fantasy by the skill with which he handles his Venetian atmosphere. But in his autobiographical novel, Dos Passos simply binds his characters to his thesis—the "choosing" of America and its institutions—and doesn't let go. Despite the reader's knowledge that Dos Passos is telling us about himself, about Hemingway (who was incensed at the portrait of himself as George Elbert Warner) and about other notable men and women, the characters seem terribly wooden. And there is no sense of atmosphere to rescue them.

What was it that gave Dos Passos his considerable reputation in the 1930s? Even a contemporary critic who has fewer reservations about his novels than I do would not, I assume, number him today among the major novelists of our century. The only answer I can offer is that the Dos Passos who wrote *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* incorporated literary modernism in his work with an ease no other writer could match. His books had the look and feel of modern masterpieces. And he was an easy master to read. Compare reading *U.S.A.* with reading *Ulysses* or *The Death of Virgil* or even *The Sound and the Fury*. As Marshall McLuhan pointed out in an essay written more than thirty years ago, Dos Passos appears to make demands on his readers without really making demands. A reader is not forced to work at a Dos

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Passos novel. And none of the readers of *U.S.A.* are required, as McLuhan noted, "to have much more reading agility than the reader of the daily press."

Like the novels of Thomas Wolfe, Dos Passos's novels were best read when one was young. They offered the youthful reader the illusion that his own life had been touched by the modern. The appeal of *U.S.A.* was not political but esthetic. Dos Passos captured what then seemed an advanced sensibility and placed it in the service of what then seemed an advanced writing technique. His politics, even for someone who sympathized with them, were beside the point. What one valued in *U.S.A.* was its modernism, which was easy to absorb, and its pessimism, which seemed generational. In Dos Passos, the young reader confronted a writer who insisted that his was the real America. Both Mary French and "Meester Veelson" existed, and *U.S.A.* made them accessible. What the deeply conservative *Midcentury* has in common with *U.S.A.* is a strategy of attitudes. The idols changed, but the appeal was intended to remain the same. Dos Passos was still for "the little man" and against "machine civilization"; he thrust "individual heroism" against a hostile environment; he stood for "values" in American life. The little man went from being a labor organizer to one who struggled against domination by unions; the heroes became generals and senators instead of labor radicals and scientists; the values now upheld an absolutely untrammeled individualism instead of the possibility of a cooperative commonwealth. And through it all, Dos Passos insisted that he had not changed.

What holds up today in *U.S.A.* is Dos Passos's eye for American life. There is a nervous energy to the trilogy that remains appealing. Things are happening to the country, if not to the characters, in the novel. The "Newsreel" sequences capture us in a collage of headlines; the "Camera Eye" sequences project the events of Dos Passos's own life onto a broader canvas; the biographies present portraits of individual Americans that command our attention still. Everything works—except the narrative. The first biography in *U.S.A.* is of Debs, and it is done in a prose that is consciously weighty, almost biblical—just the right tone, the reader feels, for a secular saint's life. The last is of Samuel Insull, the Chicago utility magnate and

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embezzler, and here the prose is ironic, an example of Dos Passos's turning capitalism itself on the spit. Through such biographies, Dos Passos tried to "organize the chaotic whole of American life into an artistic pattern."

As he grew older, Dos Passos became less and less patient with the restrictions the novel imposed. He had always viewed the novelist's task in large terms, and it is easy to understand the attraction that history held for him. Despite the "Camera Eye" sequences of *U.S.A.* and despite the autobiographical *Chosen Country*, he was never really comfortable writing about himself. The histories that he wrote during his last thirty years live as the bulk of his fiction from that time does not. In writing history he was no less conservative than he was in writing fiction, but he was less ideological, less hampered by his theses. His view remained a novelist's view. If that made for overly simplified history, it also made for powerful storytelling. His histories are, in fact, his homage to the Anglo-Saxon spirit. He himself embraced this nation and its past with a passionate dedication. He had gone from being an outsider to becoming a Virginia squire. As a consequence, his books on Jefferson and the Founding Fathers possess vitality and authority. And they are better written than most of his novels.

Dos Passos's best work as a novelist was structured by his sense of history. It is a sense he shared with Faulkner, a greater novelist, who was able to create character out of his argument with the past. In the prebellum South, Faulkner found an enduring myth that was to feed his genius. Dos Passos sought the same thing—first in the conscious proletariat and then in the Founding Fathers, who had created America's "storybook democracy." Even this reflects his distance from us. We do not expect such a passion for history in our novelists today. Other than Gore Vidal, I cannot think of an important American novelist for whom history is a living source of material and inspiration.

To reread Dos Passos is to recognize that he was the victim of time, not of the politics of his critics. He was never the major writer so many of his contemporaries in the 1920s and 1930s claimed he was. His work has certainly dated more quickly and more completely than the work of Hemingway, Fitzgerald or Faulkner. And yet there remains something enduring about his best work, as there remains something appealing about the man himself. *Three Soldiers*, *Manhattan Transfer*, *U.S.A.*, even *Midcentury*, speak of how a writer can build his time, can create an entire country, acting as an "architect of history." Dos Passos's great subject was the United States in the twentieth century. And it is, I suppose, suitably ironic that he was a casualty of that century, a casualty of his age as well as of literature. □

Tea and Toyotas

JOAN MELLEN

FROM BONSAI TO LEVI'S: When West Meets East: An Insider's Surprising Account of How the Japanese Live. *By George Fields. Macmillan. 213 pp. $14.95.*

ALL-JAPAN: The Catalogue of Everything Japanese. *Introduction by Oliver Statler. William Morrow/Quill. 224 pp. $29.95. Paper $14.95.*

BEHIND THE MASK: On Sexual Demons, Sacred Mothers, Transvestites, Gangsters and Other Japanese Cultural Heroes. *By Ian Buruma. Pantheon. 242 pp. $16.95.*

THIS KIND OF WOMAN: Ten Stories by Japanese Women Writers, 1960-1976. *Edited by Yukiko Tanaka and Elizabeth Hanson. Putnam/Perigee. 287 pp. Paper $8.95.*

In the wake of the American occupation, the Japanese became newly obsessed by *nihon jin ron*, theories of the Japanese people. With the old feudal ways abolished by fiat and *demokurashi* embraced, who were they? More recently, as the fruits of the "economic miracle" have permeated Japan, the tone of the *nihon jin ron* has changed. The apologias of the postwar period have given way to arrogantly self-confident, nationalistic assertions that since Japan has surpassed Detroit, the foreigners would do well to imitate the Japanese. Film director Masaki Kobayashi's recent four-and-a-half-hour epic, *Tokyo Saiban*, looks at the Tokyo war-crimes trial in light of the American adventure in Vietnam; the film closes with shots of the Hiroshima bombing. So much for war guilt. Revisionist historians in Japan now claim that an American oil embargo made Pearl Harbor inevitable and that Japan fought the war to end Western colonialism in Asia. Others contend that Japan's political system is the world's most democratic. Gone is the old sense of insecurity; in its place is the insistence that Japan has at last learned all there is to know from the West.

Meanwhile, on both sides of the Pacific, *nihon jin ron* proliferate. One recent example by a Japanese-born Australian is a study of Japanese consumerism appropriately titled *From Bonsai to Levi's*. "In a vertical society, one is expected to rise, not fall," author George Fields notes. So because in Japan the more expensive Johnnie Walker Black was introduced first, it is not easy to sell Johnnie Walker Red. A far more charming effort to reply to the Portuguese Jesuit João Rodrigues's sixteenth-century contention that "nobody can understand them" is *All-Japan: The Catalogue of Everything Japanese*, a large-format, gorgeously illustrated paperback. Eight Japanists take turns exploring Japan's "lively arts of living," from "The Bath" and "The Tea Ceremony" to "Medicine" and "Child's Play." The detail is exquisite. The extraordinary photographs depict even the Japanese art of plastic food displays, called here "the *mingei* (folk craft) of modern-day Japan." There is also a robot rickshawman with Meiji period clothes and high-tech legs. (*All-Japan* tells us, however, that by far the best present for Japanese friends is a gift-wrapped fifth of Red *or* Black Label Johnnie Walker!)

For a more serious and original example of the contemporary *nihon jin ron*, we must turn to Ian Buruma's *Behind the Mask*, a penetrating search for Japan through the heroes of its popular culture. Here we meet Japanese icons from *kachan*, the eternal mother, to *bishonen*, the effeminate boy-hero familiar to American audiences as the ill-fated Minamoto no Yoshitsune in Akira Kurosawa's *The Men Who Tread*

Joan Mellen first went to Japan in 1972 as a winner of a Mainichi Shimbun *essay contest to define "Japan and the Japanese." She has since written three books about Japan, including* The Waves at Genji's Door *(Pantheon).*

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on the Tiger's Tail. The late Ivan Morris, that brilliant commentator on Japan, called Yoshitsune—one of the most beloved of Japanese historical figures—"the mythical hero whose destruction guarantees the survival and stability of society."

The persistence of this weak male *bishonen* figure in modern Japanese culture is significant because, Buruma cautions, if we see the Japanese as arrogant, aggressive, ruthless, single-minded workaholics, they think of themselves as *yasashii*—gentle, meek and kindly. They are *wetto*—wet, suffused with warmth and sentiment; we, the foreigners, are *dorai*—dry, rationalistic and hence insensitive. The extremes of sex and violence in the popular culture of these meek, mild, kind and forbearing people are the result of aggressive impulses so rigorously suppressed in daily life that they have been driven into fantasy. (Except, Buruma wisely notes, in the case of Japanese children, who are so notoriously over-indulged that their treatment resembles that afforded drunks and foreigners, who are not held socially responsible for anything they do or say.)

Some of the violence of Japanese art, Buruma suggests, may express "anger at having lost the pure Arcadia of early childhood." The sadistic pornography, the violent bloodbaths on film, are "ritual screaming," an effective way of preserving order. They satisfy a need for harmony among a people crowded onto a tiny island where, shoulder to shoulder, they must preserve their social contract. So persistent is this demand for *wa* ("harmony") that political discussions are avoided in Japan. Where consensus simply cannot be reached, preserving *tatemae*—the appearance of the way things ought to be—is preferable to disturbing the unity of the group.

When students in the Red Army—nonconformists in the Japanese tradition—killed eleven of their comrades for disloyalty, Japanese criticism centered not on the murders but on the fact that the revolutionaries surrendered instead of dying in the traditional samurai manner. A father who hanged himself in a gesture of apology for his son's surrender was applauded; the surviving Red Army members were scorned for their lack of sincerity—their hearts were not *makoto* ("pure"). It is worth noting that both the radical students of the 1960s and the "nostalgic old soldiers of the Empire" shared a taste for the *yakuza*, or gangster-hero of popular films; distinctions between right and left become meaningless in Japan before a yearning for the noble past, so preferable to the cultural confusion of the present.

When he discusses the Takarazuka dance troupe, virgins all, Buruma acknowledges the plight of the Japanese woman. It comes as no surprise, he says rightly, to find girls reluctant to grow up (the Takarazuka boasts a 70-year-old virgin star) in a society with so institutionalized a double standard. But Buruma never penetrates the mask of the Japanese woman. Luckily, *This Kind of Woman: Ten Stories by Japanese Women Writers*, provides us with a glimpse into her psyche in the postwar period. These marvelous *shosetsu* ("prose fictions") describe the lives of women after the inundation of paper reforms begun by General MacArthur. Those reforms included the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, equal property rights, freedom of marriage, equal grounds for divorce, a woman's right of guardianship over her children when widowed, equal admittance to tax-supported schools including the universities, the right to transact business without her husband's consent and the right to succeed to an equal share of her father's wealth.

By November 1945, Japanese film directors were forbidden to portray with approval the oppression or degradation of wives. Instead, they were entreated to show "how every human being and every class of society was respected." Women suddenly appeared on screen as lawyers, teachers and actresses, and men and women kissed in a Japanese movie for the first time. In a confusion of paternalism with liberation, Japan also became the first nation to grant women the right to a monthly menstruation leave. Japanese women from 15 to 25 still have the highest suicide rate in the world.

The stories in *This Kind of Woman* reveal that consciousness does not change by edict. They explore the toll exacted on women by the postwar boom. In fact, Japanese women often choose to forgo their rights and usually do not take those menstruation leaves for fear of being accused of shirking responsibility. A man and a woman entering a company on equal footing usually find that by age 35 the man's pay is 50 percent higher than the woman's. To get around the egalitarian pension laws, employers often force women to retire early and sacrifice their pension—or else they are employed on a part-time basis, although in practice they may work as many hours as full-time workers.

The characters in these exciting, often brilliant stories are office workers, housewives, mothers, laundresses, textile designers; one even heads a workers' school as she prepares to join the Communist Party. But whatever their circumstances, it is not easy for any of them to renounce the neo-Confucian duties Japanese women have owed to parents, husbands and children for nearly four centuries. Their desire to rebel fills these women with guilt and self-revulsion. Self-loathing stalks them because their discontent makes them feel they are not normal. Perpetually insecure, they can find scant support for even the feeblest attempts to choose the terms of their own lives.

In "Boxcar of Chrysanthemums," Fumiko Enchi writes about a woman who decides to remain with a retarded husband, enduring his voracious sexuality. In discussing the story, Enchi admits that she almost didn't write it because she feared that her heroine might "end up being like a listless, white cat." The bored, lonely and overworked widow of "Luminous Watch," by Setsuko Tsumura, can only say about her circumstances, "*Shikata ga nai*" ("It can't be helped").

Whatever laws she lives under, the Japanese woman has so little precedent for independence that even the smallest step toward it becomes a cause for celebration. In "Lingering Affection," by Harumi Setouchi, a textile designer waits to find out whether her lover has committed suicide; when she finds he has not, she can open her newspaper to the apartment rental ads. In "Partei," by Yumiko Kurahashi, one of the best of the stories, the heroine finds it difficult to write the "life history" requested by the Communist Party because she fears being mired in the past. Finally she admits that she does not really believe in anything; she loves neither the "you" to whom she has addressed her confession, nor the worker who has impregnated her, nor a man named S. who wants her, nor the Party. Many of these stories are in the confessional mode, a long-established tradition in Japanese literature. As *All-Japan* explains in its section on fiction, "the Japanese novelist has been both the voice and the

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scapegoat for the forbidden wishes and needs of an energetic but repressed people. The confessional mode is the mechanism whereby he acknowledges these needs, then does public penance." It is also a perfect vehicle for bringing the confusion facing the modern Japanese woman into literature for the first time.

The men in these stories, cast into permanent infancy by their addiction to *amae*—the draining mother love so well described by Buruma in *Behind the Mask*—seem peculiarly lacking in self-knowledge. The women, no less disoriented, are at least fully aware of their weaknesses, and of the society that affords them so little peace. In "The Last Time," by Taeko Kono, a bitterly humorous story, a wife decides that because she treated her husband as if he were a spoiled son and she a doting mother, they never had a real marriage. In "Family in Hell," by Taeko Tomioka, Nahoko sees her life with the callow Sho as like that of "two children who play house." Indeed, Sho leaves her with the line, "Don't you dare say anything bad about my mother!" In "The Man Who Cut the Grass," by Michiko Yamamoto, the husband is so insensitive that he remains unaware of his wife's descent into madness.

The idea of self-sacrifice still conspires against the Japanese woman's quest for self-esteem. In Takako Takahashi's "Doll Love," the heroine, twice abandoned by suicidal men, decides "it would be all right if I detached myself from everything. In order not to cause anyone to die, I should act as if I were dead and hide myself somewhere." The saddest of these women is the pathetic heroine of "A Bed Of Grass," by Yuko Tsushima. Lonely, timid, afraid of heights, of men, of birds, of the wind, she is oppressed by a mother forever mourning the loss of her husband and son: "I hated myself and I hated mother," she says. Ignored by their mothers, giving unstintingly to selfish men, some of these women still cannot relinquish the hope that they too might one day be offered *amae*.

The style of these stories is fresh and vital; their descriptive technique marks the writers as masters of the *shosetsu*. Nor do they lack humor. Noriko of "The Last Time" selects an eggshell colored dress for her suicide because it "would set off the color of blood nicely." And she decides not to throw out all her shoes: "If I get rid of everything that's mine, the house will look as if a daughter has left to get married or a maid has run away." These writers are adept at satirizing the preoccupation with shame and loss of face that Ruth Benedict described in *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*. (Noriko, by the way, never intends to kill herself; she survives to demand what she sees as a real marriage, not just "a legal bond, a shared household, sexual love and emotional love.")

As chronicles of the burgeoning consciousness of the Japanese woman, the stories are fictional *nihon jin ron*; they offer not only theories of the Japanese woman, but explorations of her soul, her hopes and the inhospitable terrain she has still to cross. □

Somebodyness

BILL FARRELL

COMMUNITY IS POSSIBLE: Repairing America's Roots. *By Harry C. Boyte. Harper & Row. 243 pp. $6.95.*

At various times in our history, radicals and social critics of the left and right have called for a rebirth of community, though they have tended to mean rather different things by the phrase. Despite that, efforts to sustain and restore the ideal of community in America, whether emanating from the left or the right, have not fared well. Indeed, from its very beginnings, American history is strewn with the remains of ideal communities that could not be sustained.

Bound together by their vision of themselves as the people of God, the Puritan settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony strove to carve the kingdom of God out of the New England wilderness. Forced by hardship and scarcity to rely on and support one another in order to survive, they hoped to create, in John Winthrop's words, "a City upon a Hill." But the end of hardship and the increased opportunities for the accumulation of material possessions soon brought with them an end to cooperative farming, eliminating the economic basis of village unity. As historian James Henretta has pointed out, even before the first generation of New England settlers had died, compact villages built around a common were superseded by more widely dispersed holdings.

Various nineteenth- and twentieth-century reform movements linked to specific ethnic or geographic communities did enjoy some notable successes. In *Community Is Possible*, Harry Boyte relies on the most recent of these, the civil rights movement, which drew much of its vitality from the black church and the ties the church provided to the world around it. Of course, there were others. In *Workingmen's Democracy*, Leon Fink has shown how the Knights of Labor depended on the mobilization of ethnic and racial communities for much of their success. Similarly, the Socialist Party scored victories in mining and industrial towns. (Eugene V. Debs's blending of small-town values, radical republicanism and socialism comes to mind.) In urban areas, both the Socialists and labor unions were successful in organizing ethnic groups by making the community central to their efforts. And ethnic communities would later nurture the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Yet even after some significant and lasting victories, the spirit of these movements sagged and their momentum was lost. In some cases, the community disappeared when a plant or mine was closed in the town. In other instances, the neighborhood was physically demolished by the forces of urban renewal. And as reform movements have also learned, local power bases are often insufficient in a national struggle.

Despite those limitations, Boyte proposes a rebirth of community as the beginning of an answer to the "multiplicity of crises" facing America. Although the examples he provides are strongly connected to specific neighborhoods and locations, Boyte defines community the way Martin Luther King Jr. described the civil rights movement: as a "school for citizenship" where ordinary people could acquire a "new sense of somebodyness." In Boyte's view, only an active citizenry guided by a sense of citizenship can revitalize American democracy.

Boyte's book comes to life with his descriptions of ordinary people at work trying to save their communities and gain control over their lives. In

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St. Louis in 1969, 20-year-old Bertha Gilkey was elected to chair the tenants' association of Cochran Gardens, a crime-infested public housing project which had been the victim of years of deterioration and neglect. Slowly, the tenants restored the project and in 1976, as a result of a court decision, gained control of its management. In 1977, they successfully blocked a plan for urban renewal that would have destroyed Cochran Gardens. The cleanup continued, crime dropped and Cochran Gardens became a safe and decent place to live. The tenants' association expanded its activities, saving parts of the surrounding neighborhood from destruction and simultaneously building more housing for low-income families. Under Gilkey's leadership, an impoverished and neglected group obtained a sense of somebodyness.

In 1945, San Antonio developed a plan to improve the drainage system of its West Side in order to stop the chronic flooding of the Mexican-American neighborhood. By the early 1970s, no money had yet been spent on the project though more than 100,000 families were affected by the flooding that accompanied each heavy rain. After a particularly severe rainfall in 1973, a new organization called Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) brought a large angry crowd to a meeting with the city manager. They obtained a $46 million drainage bond as well as another $8 million for neighborhood improvements. Largely as a result of COPS's neighborhood organizing, a city council committed to COPS's budget was elected. The organization flourished despite the opposition of San Antonio's elite, and this political mobilization led to the election of San Antonio's first Mexican-American mayor, Henry Cisneros.

As these examples clearly show, ordinary citizens can gain control over their lives and the fate of their communities. But if Boyte's book is to help other groups beset by similar problems, he should have provided more accounts of successful organizations. Since he presents no analysis of the limitations of local, community-based power, he does not give the reader a clue as to how a community such as the one organized by COPS might effectively confront a problem demanding national action. If such a difficulty cannot be dealt with successfully, how should the community respond?

As the course of the nuclear freeze movement illustrates, this is not a minor problem. Advocates of a nuclear freeze successfully presented the idea in town meetings throughout Vermont. The movement spread from Vermont to the rest of the nation, winning city council votes and local referendums and reaching its peak in 1982. It was quite impressive. Yet when faced with the implacable hostility of the Reagan Administration and the willingness of Democrats such as Les Aspin to support the arms race, the movement stalled, if it did not die altogether. Barring a miraculous and unforeseen recovery, it will not play much of a role in this election. Although Boyte briefly touches on the freeze movement, he says nothing about its collapse.

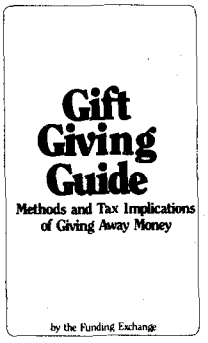
Finishing Boyte's book, I was left with a feeling of incompleteness. Of course, one is pleased that the book exists even if good intentions do not a humane future make. A rebirth of community is something to be worked for, but it would be a mistake to believe that such a rebirth is the answer to all or even many of our problems. □

FILMS.

ANDREW KOPKIND

All of Me
Nicaragua: No Pasaran

In one short spell, *Tootsie* is nominated for an Oscar for best picture and Julie Andrews is nominated for best actress for impersonating a man in *Victor, Victoria*; *La Cage aux Folles* gets a Tony for best musical; Boy George appears on the cover of *Newsweek* in lipstick and feathers; and Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin are hermaphroditically sealed in a single body in *All of Me*. All that drag must murmur something about the social acceptability of cross-dressing, and it may say more profound things about the current cultural confusion over gender identity. Comedy nowadays is largely concerned with the migration of anima and animus across psychic frontiers unguarded by the traditional *migras* of guilt and shame. Not since Shakespeare sent the old wooden "O" into peals of laughter with his double sex changes (boys playing girls dressed as boys) has gender role-reversal been the bottom line of humor. That's entertainment, I suppose;



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but it may also be therapy.

It's true that between Rosalind/Ganymede in *As You Like It* and Roger/Edwina in *All of Me* the drag tradition was kept alive in those dark recesses of the id where acting meets acting out. The Hasty Pudding Shows gave Harvard boys a chance to breathe a little fresh air after all those awful winters in the closet. The traveling U.S.O. shows during World War II collected drag royalty from all over the country and put it to work for the duration. Halloween and Mardi Gras still empty the bars into the streets. Odd bits of sexual avant-garde satire, like Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge*, kept the flame flickering. And every once in a while drag would peek out at a prudish world—*Charley's Aunt*, Flip Wilson's Geraldine, Uncle Miltie's campy turns—to test the prevailing winds.

But there's a vastly different cultural connotation to the current crop. For one thing, transvestite comedy dominates the scene, takes all the prizes and makes all the money. *All of Me*, for instance, is widely reported in the pop media as Steve Martin's breakthrough after repeated flops in Woody Allen updates (*Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, *The Man With Two Brains* and *The Lonely Guy*).

More interesting, however, is the specific content of the drag routines. In all the recent examples, the cross-dresser learns something important about the ways and means of the opposite sex, and about sex in general. Not how they *do* it—although Martin has a hilarious bit in the men's room when his female soul can't figure out how to handle his male equipment—but how it feels to have a different identity, what it means and what effect gender-directed behavior has on lovers and friends. Dustin Hoffman's Michael/Dorothy in *Tootsie* finds that the barriers blocking his relationship with his girlfriend are miraculously removed with a tasteful swish and a little makeup. Boy George must understand that his popularity with a female audience—from high-school teens to Joan Rivers—is due to the unthreatening figure he presents.

The new drags mock sexual stereotypes more than they ridicule the opposite sex. That was always the function of homosexual drag, but it has not usually been the purpose of straight-female impersonation in show business. Milton Berle's garish girls had no redeeming existential purpose: they were simply devastating insults to women. Craig Russell's Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland (in his little gem of a film, *Outrageous*) expressed their pain by mimicking the mannerisms they employed to fulfill men's expectations of the female sex icon.

There's no viciousness in Steve Martin's Roger Cobb. As the story goes, he is already a schizoid spirit, torn by the demands of his life-role as a lawyer and his longings to be a jazz musician. His respectable love relationship with the boss's daughter is impossible, and he can hardly pronounce the terrible "m-word" looming at the end of their affair: m-m-m-m-marriage. When the incredibly rich, terminally invalid Edwina Cutwater (Tomlin) parks her persona in his body, Roger rebels. It's not easy to go about business, in the bedroom as well the courtroom, with a double identity. The funny stuff happens here, but in the end he grows rather fond of his female half, and in a delightful last dance he finds a fantasy to make his gender vacation last forever.

In *All of Me*, as well as in the other drag movies, simple transvestitism seems to be moving through transsexualism and approaching androgyny. That is, after all, the postmodern ideal: the liberation of human behavior from the prison of gender. Martin's best moment—the one that almost transcends comedy and sends out a shock about the future of sexual roles—comes when Roger's sleeping body is entirely taken over by Edwina's anima, which (because of the plot business) must exhibit masculine manners. So we see Martin doing Tomlin doing Martin; or is it Roger being Edwina being Roger? It's back to Shakespeare's male actor playing Rosalind playing Ganymede.

What's too bad is the filmmaker's decision to defer Tomlin's talents to Martin's. She is one of the few actresses who can do male impersonations, and the only one who does them well. Tomlin's Tommy Velour (in several television appearances) destroyed Wayne Newton forever, and her job on the late, great Marvin Gaye (with a little Teddy Pendergrass and some Al Green thrown in) is a drag classic. Like Martin, Tomlin needs good roles and good directing to shine, and she deserves better than she was given in *All of Me*. I had the feeling that director Carl Reiner, who has a wonderful sense of post-Grossinger's

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humor, could never get the hang of Edwina. For obvious reasons.

By the time you read this—indeed, by the time I write this—preparations may be under way for a United States invasion of Nicaragua. In Managua, they have been expecting an attack for more than a year, and David Bradbury's deeply felt documentary, *Nicaragua: No Pasaran*, can be seen as a good backgrounder for the opposition that will surely grow in response.

Bradbury, an Australian filmmaker who has previously chronicled the life of radical journalist Wilfred Burchett (in *Public Enemy Number One*), lays out the familiar history of the Sandinista revolution, focusing on the experience of Commandante Tomás Borge, a founder and the only surviving member of the original front. He knows that an American audience will see the film after a barrage of anti-Sandinista propaganda, and he takes into account the inevitable questions and cynical doubts the media campaign provokes about censorship, Soviet penetration and totalitarian drift. Bradbury was lucky to have been in Managua when Pope John Paul II breezed through last year, and his cutting account of that wretched visit provides important revisionist history. But the best sequence is the last: American military airplanes across the border in Honduras lift, soar and alight under the inspired music of Laurie Anderson. Packaged by itself, it would make a wonderful political rock video. □

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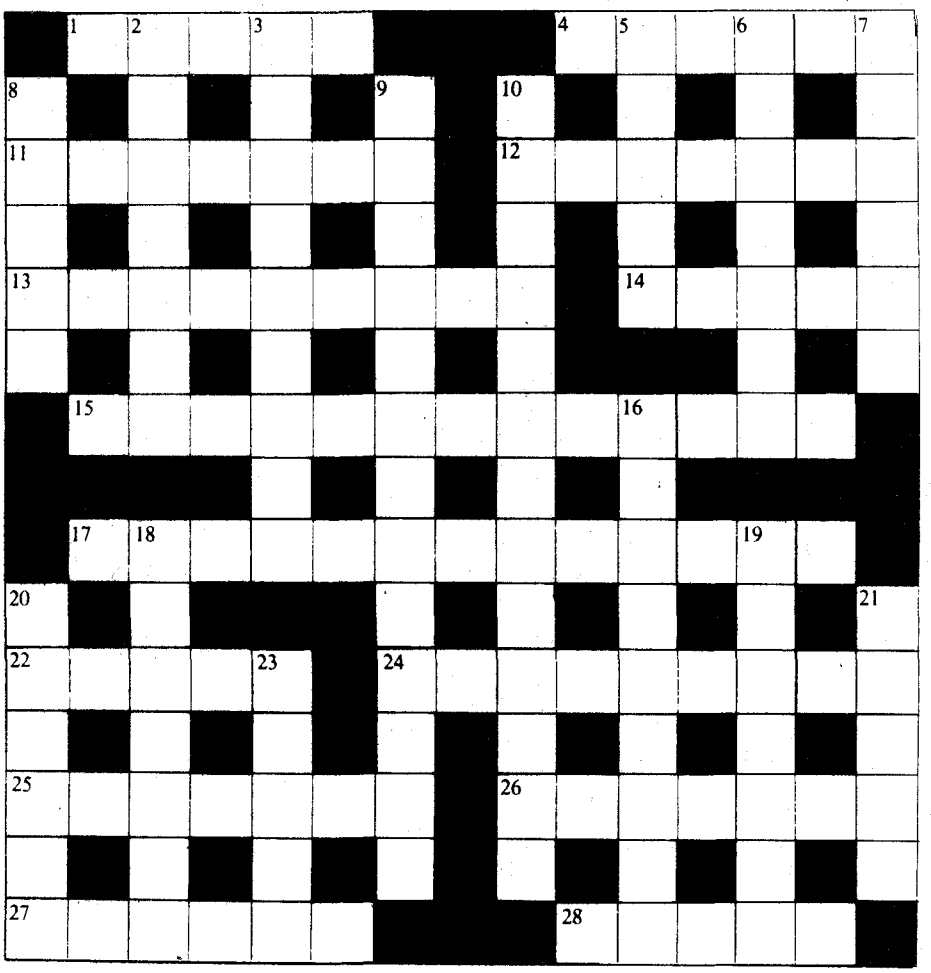

ACROSS

1 Leading man, possibly, associated literarily with a tumble-down house. (5)
4 Revolutionary, going from A to Z about a kind of cloth running the wrong way. (6)
11 Used to play a carol in revised setting. (7)
12 It's too bad about Gehenna or Tartarus—but that's the character of Shakespeare! (7)
13 Might be associated with a certain national flag—but it's really just a rag. (5,4)
14 Like the bones of my deep-fived father, the wrong 11 doesn't get in. (5)
15 Everything repeats—at least things do at first with such. (13)
17 Study the bacon supply, for a fee. (13)
22 12, for example, works traditionally. (5)
24 A widely known state—but has it changed to iron yet? (9)
25 Not a rail turnover in the dock. (2,5)
26 Re a veto which is overturned, you have to take in too much to do it. (7)
27 The work of I.R.S. is so hard! (6)
28 Not the sort of den Daniel was in, as we learn. (5)

DOWN

2 It's the skinny part on top to the Spanish, which could be cutting! (7)
3 Dancing mice spied here, which could spread trouble all over! (9)
5 Time to pawn something, by the sound of it, for this special purpose. (2,3)
6 One rail gets somewhat bent, but the flyer might get wrecked without it. (7)
7 A vote could be taken on nothing but a Greek or Roman deity. (6)
8 The measure of electricity follows little science, but it's a wayward thing. (5)
9 How our forefathers declared themselves, and ended in plenty of trouble. (13)
10 Look over the standard supply—it may go like wildfire! (13)
16 Does the religious group go underground if you do? (You might get cross!) (9)
18 Certainly not a hidden weapon—if you don't prefer to strain for the clue. (7)
19 You might have one with a wrench, but the cereal comes out of this part of the box. (4,3)
20 In addition, given where the polish might go. (2,4)
21 The end of democracy has ways of making certain cells. (5)
23 A legal right to hold property would certainly be strange! (5)

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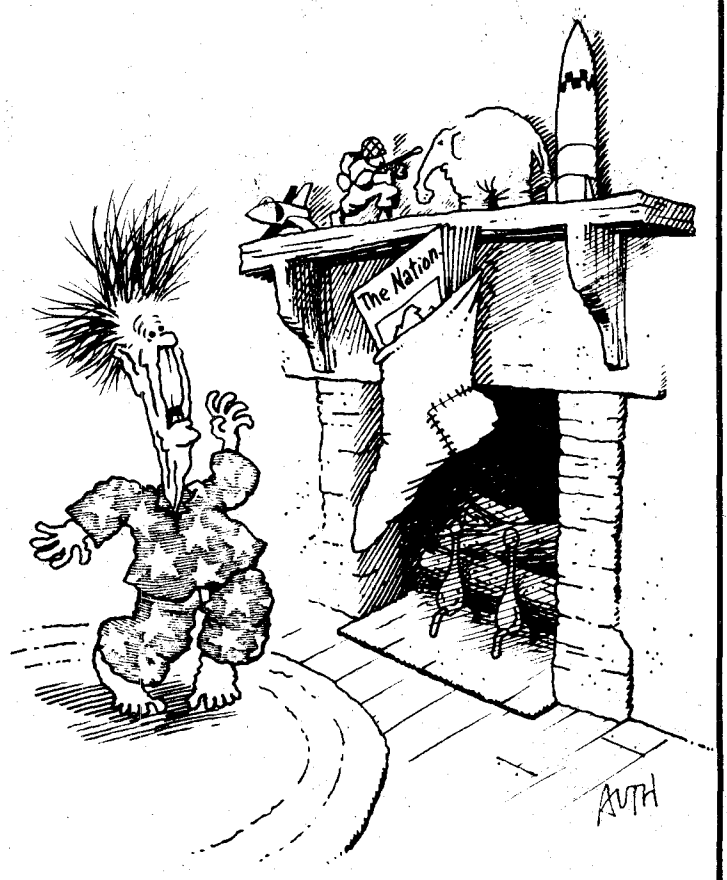

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